NEA Today

April 1998
Vol. 16, No. 8
Washington, D.C.

The Newspaper for Members
of the National Education Association

AFT/NEA Unity Talks: A Special Update
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Making Learning Soar

Eager to excite students about school work? Take off into the world of work!

See page 4

Seattle counselor Clara Scott and Joey Stewart

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Bob Chase

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NEA and AFT members are already hard at work, on a joint council, addressing issues of classroom discipline, school infrastructure, and teacher quality from this New Unionism perspective.

Other reasons for unification are no less urgent. In state after state, we face an onslaught of campaigns to weaken public education—aggressive voucher efforts, for example, are now being pushed in 16 states, including New York, Texas, Florida, and California.

Opponents of public education are united, and we must be united, too.

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If the campaign to weaken private-sector unions succeeds, then our public education unions will be next. We stand or fall together.

Above all, I believe that a unified new union can be *the* decisive force not just for defending public education, but for revitalizing America's public schools.

But we can't accomplish big things with small ideas. That's why we must now dare to forge a new and better union.

To that end, I appeal to you to make the cause of NEA-AFT unification your cause, despite the inevitable fears and risks. For 25 years in the classroom, I taught history. Today, I ask you to join me in making history.

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NEA Executive Committee
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Get to Work!

The next time students say, "Why do I have to learn this?" or "I don't need to know this to get a job," have them roll up their sleeves. Literally.

When students connect school work with the world of work, they get motivated to learn. That's the premise behind the school-to-work movement that's gaining steam and support in schools and communities across the country.

The best of today's school-to-work movement differs from yesterday's in a few key ways. The new movement:

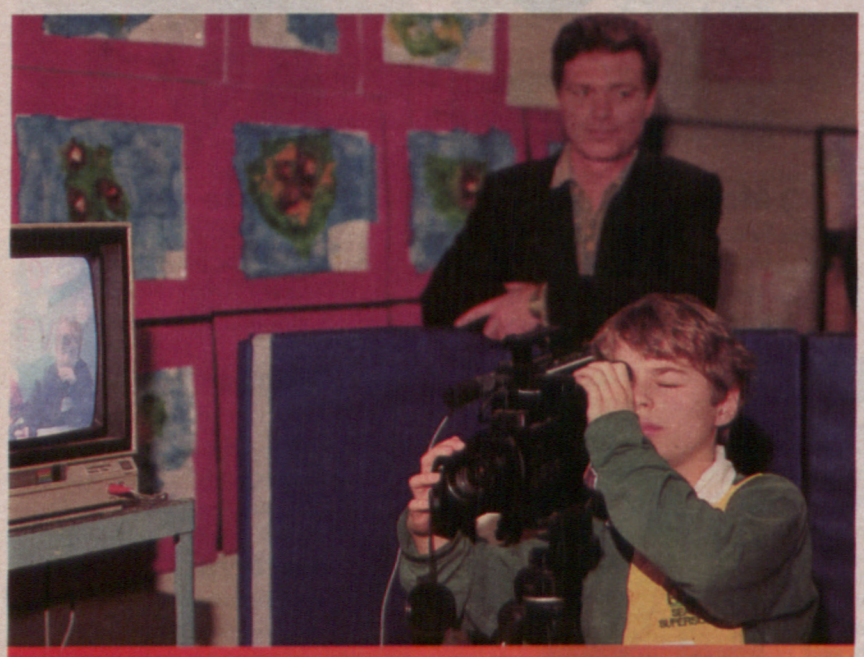
- *Unites educators, parents, students, colleges, and business partners.*
- *Reaches all students, whether or not they plan to go to college.*
- *Connects all workplace experiences to classroom ones.*

And, as education reporter and author Lynn Olson says, the new movement doesn't see school-to-work "as a single transition that happens at age 18." Instead it sees school-to-work programs "as creating stepping stones for students, in which one step can always lead to another."

Students of all ages are taking these "steps" in Seattle, Washington, and NEA Today*'s Karen Gutloff here takes a look at how the efforts of the school district's school-to-work office, the Seattle Education Association, and the business community are paying off.*

Take a look at the programs described briefly here, then decide: Is today's school-to-work movement destined to become another fringe fad—or a centerpiece of the entire movement to reform today's public schools?

Photographs by Ellen Banner



Jeff Hume's students work as camera operators, writers, and interviewers for newscasts on KIDZ-TV productions.

Elementary Kids Run the Village

Seattle's B.F. Village is a bustling place on market day.

You can cash your paycheck at the bank, dash into the bakery for chocolate chip cookies, watch a live talk show at the television station, or check out an exhibit on Native American culture at the local science museum.

Twice a year, the 320 K-5 students at B.F. Day School transform their halls into storefronts and themselves into mini entrepreneurs.

"Early each year, students decide on a business they'd like to run," explains Denise Fogleman, coordinator of the Village Project. "They do research by going on field trips to local businesses," she says, "then they make it come to life on market day."

More than just fun and games, market days teach the kids basic skills, while connecting what they're learning in the classroom with what they'll need to know later in life.

By writing news stories and ads for the television station, for example, Jeff Hume's second, third, and fourth graders practice their grammar and language skills.

In the Village bank, fifth grade students apply math principles by exchanging each U.S. dollar for five "B.F. Day Dollars."

Another benefit: Market days help the school establish closer ties to local businesses. Owners donate time and materials to help student businesses get off the ground. Stockbrokers come to school to talk to students about finances. A disk jockey briefs students on producing a talk show. The hospital donates band-aids for the kids' first aid storefront. And so on.

"Retailers" in Toyland sell beanie babies, puppets, dolls, and wood carvings, with help from teacher Donna Thompson.

Members of the local Chamber of Commerce turn out for market day to lend support and congratulate students on their hard work. Parents and district administrators come by to tour the marketplace, and buy jewelry, flowers, and baked goods.

A final note: Learning about businesses doesn't stop when market day ends, Fogelman says.

"Students write journal entries explaining what they learned," she explains. "And classroom lessons in math, writing, and other subjects are continually related to what occurred on market day, making the event an even more powerful learning experience."

For more information about B.F. Day School's village project, contact Denise Fogleman at 206/320-7761 or send E-mail to denisef@scn.org.

High Schoolers See Their Shadows

Job shadowing programs and internships are making tremendous changes in students at Nathan Hale High School in inner-city Seattle.

Consider the 17-year-old student who used drugs and threatened to quit school. He's now an intern with the Seattle Arts Commission, hanging artwork in public spaces. He has never missed a day of work and is doing better in his classes.

Or the student who was planning to drop out of school because of poor math grades and family problems. He now works as an apprentice with a construction crew, has a math tutor, and will graduate by summer's end.

Or the student who interned at a pharmaceutical company and observed a world-renowned gene cloner. She now attends college at Yale.

"Many of our students come from neighborhoods where they don't often get to see the best business practices or the most modern equipment being used," says Sandy Tossini, a vocational counselor and SEA member.

"When they spend time in the business world, they see the relevance of the work they do in school," Tossini explains, "and it motivates them.

Job shadowing is part of the freshman curriculum at Nathan Hale. All ninth graders research occupations in the career center. Then they log into a school database containing a list of jobs available for shadowing.

This year, 280 freshmen shadowed professionals at cancer research centers, television studios, radio stations, hospitals, city offices, airports, and communications companies.

"Students learn to write letters and make phone calls introducing themselves and arranging for Shadow Day," Tossini explains. "We provide bus tokens and directions to help them get there."

Back in the classroom, teachers like Myrna Muto tie workplace experiences to academic skills.

"Students who visit the TV stations, for example, see how computerized the operations are," Muto says. "This can open a discussion on the use of technology."

Students who spend the day at Boeing, Muto adds, "want to be pilots. Now they understand how important math classes are to that career choice."

Counselor Clara Scott shadows mechanics and pilots at Seattle's Boeing Field, then uses her experiences to help students make important career choices.

For educators launching job shadowing programs of their own, Tossini offers this advice:

- Tie workplace experiences to the curriculum. For example, have English and journalism students visit news organizations. Or allow students in government classes to visit politicians and judges.
- Make shadowing more than play time away from school by matching job visits closely to students' interests.
- Make students prove they are socially mature enough to spend a day on the job before allowing them to go.

If your school has a database to track career opportunities for students, contact Sandy Tossini at 206/232-1516. E-mail: atossini@doleta.gov.

Teachers Get in On the Act

Seattle high school counselor Clara Scott got the upgrade of her life when she boarded a small plane at Seattle's Boeing Field. She skipped first class and landed directly in the pilot's seat.

Scott is one of dozens of Seattle educators who spend time job shadowing other professionals citywide.

"I have a lot of kids who want to be pilots because they think it's glamorous," Scott says.

"Now that I've sat in the pilot's seat, I can help them understand the specific skills they need to actually pursue this as a career choice."

Scott has also shadowed professionals in the Coast Guard and at a cancer research center.

The Seattle school district's School-to-Work Office arranges the visits—and schedules substitutes when they're needed—to help educators stay abreast of the changes in today's workplace and workforce.

"A lot of educators got out of college and went straight into education," Scott says. "They often aren't aware of how much jobs have changed or how careers are related."

In the last three years, dozens of educators have spent time with firefighters, medical researchers, pilots, doctors, engineers, bankers, and other professionals.

What they learn directly benefits their students.

Scott's piloting experience will help Nathan Hale High School students understand that they'll "need good spatial and visual skills to fly a plane. And they'll need to work with maps a lot and know how to read a compass."

Plus, Scott's experiences will enlighten parents as well.

"I take what I've learned from these experiences back to parents," Scott explains, "so they can be aware of what's happening in the work world and what it means for their children."

Job shadowing gives Scott a boost in her own career as well. "I get so much out of shadowing on a personal level," she says. "It's one thing to read and attend workshops on career education," Scott adds. "It's another thing to experience it first-hand."

—Karen Gutloff

For more information, contact the Seattle school-to-work office at 206/720-3428.

School to Work: Just Another Fad?

A senior editor at Education Week, *Lynn Olson is the author of* The School-to-Work Revolution *(Addison-Wesley, 1997, $25). She spent a year observing school-to-work programs nationwide and offers her impressions of this growing phenomenon.*

Benjamin Tice Smith

Reporter and school-to-work expert Lynn Olson

Is school-to-work just another fad in education reform?
I think it's quite different from other programs I'm seeing. With school-to-work, we're really talking about a way to establish high expectations by changing some of the ways we teach.

Also, educators and employers have traditionally had a tenuous relationship. If we take these programs seriously, it requires businesses to sit down with educators and talk about what we expect of all students.

There is great risk, however. This will become just another program if educators slap the school-to-work name on pre-existing activities without changing their methods.

How does this differ from regular vocational education?
In too many cases, vocational education became a dumping ground for students who, some assumed, couldn't cut it academically and wouldn't be going to college. Good school-to-work programs really try to combine high school academics with practical applications for all students, whether they're going to college or straight to the workplace.

Why are some people taking potshots at these programs?
There is concern in conservative circles that school-to-work programs downplay academics, and that big business and government are telling people what careers to go into. Some parents are rightfully concerned about anything that cuts off a student's option to go to college.

But research in this area suggests kids participating in school-to-work programs are going on to college at the same rate or at a higher rate than other students. I've seen students encouraged to take more academics than they would otherwise.

Are some kids simply too young to engage in this kind of career exposure?
I think we have to think carefully about what's appropriate at different ages. Many elementary schools are using information about the world outside school to enrich the curriculum.

For example, if students are studying the moon, it might make sense to bring an astronaut into the classroom for a talk. But it should be clearly linked to academics, not just teaching elementary kids about jobs *per se*.

In upper high school grades, students can benefit from experiences that allow them to make specific career decisions.

Are there factors that make some programs more effective than others?
Yes. The best job shadowing programs connect the work experience to what students are studying in school. A hospital visit would connect to a class's study of the circulatory system. Just seeing what an EKG technician does isn't effective teaching. If it doesn't link back to the classroom, it's no more than a glorified field trip.

What did students tell you about their experiences doing job shadowing or internships?
Students are really making the connection between school and work.

A student who visited a hospital in Delaware told me, "If you want to pursue medicine, you have to be really good in math."

I also talked to a lot of high school students who said, "Adults are finally talking to me about my future." Or, "Now I understand why I have to learn this."

Resources

- The National School-to-Work Office has established February 2, Groundhog Day, as National Job Shadowing Day. Last February, hundreds of kids visited the workplace of such notables as Colin Powell and George Bush. Contact the office at 400 Virginia Ave., S.W., Suite 210, Washington, DC 20024, 800/251-7236.

- *The School-to-Work Revolution: How Employers and Educators Are Joining Forces To Prepare Tomorrow's Skilled Workforce.* Lynn Olson. Addison-Wesley, 1997, $25, 800/552-2259.

- *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy.* Richard J. Murnane and Frank Levy. The Free Press, 1997, $23.50, 800/223-2348.

- *Learning to Work: Employer Involvement in School-to-Work Transition Programs.* Thomas R. Bailey, ed. The Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C., 1995, $12.95 plus $4 s&h, 800/275-1447.

- Find out more about school-to-work programs in Seattle on the Web at http://stw.ssd.k12.wa.us. Or contact the Seattle Public Schools School-to-Work Office, 2120 South Jackson St., Sixth Floor, Seattle, WA 98144, 206/720-3428.

- The National Skill Standards Board sponsors projects that link skill standards with school-to-work projects. Contact the Board at 1441 L St., N.W., Suite 9000, Washington, DC 20005, 202/ 254-8628. On the Web: www.nssb.org.

- For information on how workplace skills can be integrated into the curriculum, contact the SCANS/2000 Program, Johns Hopkins University, Institute for Policy Studies, Wyman Park Building, 5th Floor, 3400 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218, Fax 410/516-4775. On the Web: http://infinia.wpmc.jhu.edu/default5.htm.

- The National School-to-Career Consortium is a collaboration of 21 organizations that provides technical assistance and resources to states with School-to-Work Opportunities Act Implementation Grants. On the Web: www.edc.org/CEEC/home/stwrfi.html.

Definitions, Please

Here are some terms to help you navigate the school-to-work maze. The definitions are taken from the National School-to-Work Office's glossary.

Apprenticeship: An opportunity that allows a student or employee to gain practical experience under the instruction of workers in a skilled trade or occupation.

Career awareness: Career awareness activities generally take place at the elementary level. They are designed to make students aware of a broad range of careers and or occupations through field trips and classroom speakers.

Career map: A written plan of study that helps students select a coherent sequence of secondary courses to prepare them for college entry or work in a selected career. Valuable for high school freshmen.

Entrepreneurial projects: Opportunities for young children to design and operate businesses.

Internships: Paid or unpaid opportunities for students to work on-site for an employer for a specified period of time to learn about an industry or occupation.

Job shadowing: Part of career exploration activities in late middle school and early high school. A student follows an employee on the job for one or more days to learn about an occupation.

SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills): Convened in 1990 to define skills needed for employment. The commission identified five competencies or skills necessary for workplace success—the ability to allocate resources, relate to others, acquire and evaluate data, understand social and organizational systems, and apply technology to specific tasks.

School-to-Work Opportunities Act: Enacted in 1994, the Act provides money to states and communities to develop programs linking schools and businesses.

Service learning: Combines community service with opportunities to reflect about that service in a school setting. Emphasizes the connections between service/volunteer experiences and academic learning.

Skill standard: Specifies the knowledge required to perform successfully in the workplace.

Vocational education: Organized educational activities that are directly related to preparing students for employment or for careers that may not require a college degree.

In the Community

From Laid-Off to Hands-On

The GM/UAW Job Bank enables laid-off auto workers to assist in Michigan public schools.

To students, they are "daily dads." To Association leaders, they're "male mentors." And to teachers, each of these fatherly auto workers is a godsend, another adult in class to help, motivate, and inspire.

But everybody at Vivian Riddle Elementary, young and old, calls these laid-off members of the United Auto Workers the "GM Guys"—a gift from General Motors and the United Auto Workers (AFL-CIO) to the schools of Lansing, Michigan.

This school year, six skilled UAW tradespeople are volunteering at Riddle while drawing full pay and benefits from the GM/UAW Job Bank for laid-off union members.

Making it possible is Project Team, a school improvement partnership that includes the Michigan Education Association, the Lansing school district, the UAW, GM, the United Way, and 15 other local agencies.

And making it work *right* is a multi-party written agreement, initiated by leaders of the NEA-affiliated Lansing Educational Assistants and UAW Local 652, which guarantees that no teacher or paraeducator will be displaced by UAW volunteers.

That's just fine by Riddle's UAW contingent, skilled wood and metal modelmakers stranded in Lansing when GM centralized its experimental engineering work in another city.

"We're not teachers or paras," stresses volunteer Michael Henry, a 28-year GM veteran. "We can't discipline students, but we do have authority as their trusted friends.

"Our most important role," Henry adds, "is correcting behavior and helping teachers whenever they need help—like copying or cutting construction paper. If it gives them more time to teach, that makes me happy."

Well, that's the short, humble version of the role of the GM Guys.

Here's the real scoop: GM and the UAW lent two of Lansing's neediest schools—on a full-time, year-round basis—people who are artists, designers, and craftsmen.

Kids tap those skills to carve and paint Pinewood Derby cars, build birdfeeders, and use measuring instruments to calculate everything from distances on maps to the weight and circumference of pumpkins.

Moreover, the UAW volunteers expose inner-city kids to intriguing interests, from taxidermy to model railroading, and a strong work ethic.

"Anything that needs to be fixed, they do it. These guys can't sit around and do nothing," marvels fourth grade teacher Sharilyn Coulson, Henry's classroom partner.

Henry is equally amazed by teachers' energy. "I get tired just watching teachers go, go, go," he says. "No one in the outside world knows what they are expected to do. Teachers deserve every penny they make, plus more."

Benefiting enormously from all this energy and adult attention are the Riddle students, many of whom come from one-parent families. Thanks to the UAW volunteers, they are:

- **Enjoying consistent relationships with male adults.** Volunteers take kids on field trips, instill self-confidence and good habits (like eating a solid breakfast and healthy snacks), and treat students like their own grandchildren.

"The kids feel comfortable with these guys," says Coulson. "The kids walk up and give them a hug. Their parents are thrilled."

- **Gaining lifelong attitudes and skills.** Volunteers and students read to one another after lunch. And Henry reports that attendance and behavior have improved—as students gain new hobbies and show more interest in class.

- **Getting the best of what teachers can offer.** Notes Sharilyn Coulson, a building rep for the Lansing Schools Education Association: "It's wonderful to have another adult in class to support what we do and keep students on task.

"The GM Guys," she concludes, "have really reached out and touched our minds, our hearts, and our families. We're tremendously grateful for everything they do."

—Written with help from MEA staffer Margaret Trimer Hartley

For More Information

Call Riddle Elementary School principal Greg Weatherspoon at 517/325-6868.

MEA

Can automobile model makers also build a model elementary school? General Motors skilled model maker Jim Breslin would say yes.

Heroes & Zeroes

Cat-in-the-Hat hats off to the hundreds of thousands of NEA members who participated in NEA's wildly successful celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2. You can keep Read Across America alive all year by reading with children, donating more books, and sending news clips and photos from your event to NEA Read Across America, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Michael Gordon

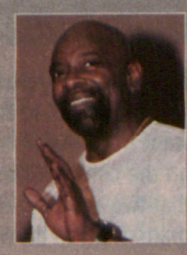
From green eggs to Hamm—Olympic gold medalist and soccer star Mia Hamm, that is. In a recent pep talk between periods of a Detroit Rockers' soccer game, Hamm encouraged girls to "celebrate all your successes no matter how big or small, [whether they take place] on the soccer field, the basketball court, or even in the classroom."

AP/Wide World

The grades are in: An "incomplete" to the media minions who reported recently that NEA and AFT have agreed to merge. The two organizations are still negotiating. See pages 13-16 for all the details.

And an *F* to *Good Housekeeping* for its story, "When Teacher Gets an *F*" (January). Using the example of a veteran teacher with a cocaine problem, the magazine implies that bad teachers abound, saved only by tenure and big, bad teacher unions.

Bravo for businessman and philanthropist Christopher Gardner, who gave $10,000 in prize money to bankroll the 1998 NEA Support Person of the Year contest. The money will go to three outstanding ESPs, who'll split their winnings with their favorite charities.



Sandy Schaefer

At the Bargaining Table

When Numbers Count

When the Pulaski County, Arkansas, school district demanded takebacks last summer, support staff mobilized, increased Association membership, and won a decent contract.

The new master agreement:

- Increases pay by more than 6 percent over three years.
- Requires posting of summer jobs—once given to bosses' kin and cronies—for Association members.
- Provides pay adjustments for lead mechanics who sub as drivers and paras who drive buses or perform invasive medical procedures.
- Boosts the attendance bonus from $200 to $400.

Says Pulaski Association of Support Staff President Sandy Hawkins: "As our payroll deduction numbers increased, administrators were easier to bargain with, and things went quickly."

An Unwelcome Imposition

In Vermont, teacher members of Green Mountain-NEA have voted to reject the Chittenden East school boards' imposition of a new contract. The local also filed an unfair labor practice charge when board members included language in the contract that had never been discussed in bargaining.

Green Mountain-NEA is now working to inform area residents of the school boards' behavior and to persuade the boards to rescind the imposition. You can E-mail support to local President Susan Wolf at Wolffden1@aol.com.

Winning 'Actioneers'

Last autumn, teachers and custodians in the Manalapan-Englishtown (New Jersey) Education Association stopped health benefit takebacks and won a raise comparable to that negotiated in a regional high school district serving their communities.

Their winning card: a member action committee separate from the bargaining team. In addition to working to rule, "actioneers" organized a meet-the-mediator rally, informational picketing, and parent outreach.

Equal Opportunity Education

In Arkansas, support staff bargain for the same right to attend professional development classes that teachers enjoy.

On Wednesday nights, paraeducator Connie Montgomery is a student again, taking a class on dealing with at-risk teens. Her fellow students are certified teachers, counselors, and administrators.

"It's such a diverse class," says Montgomery, who works in community-based instruction for the Pulaski County, Arkansas, Special School District. "And everybody is getting something out of it.

"I'm learning how to recognize things like gang signs—say, who are Crips and who are Bloods," notes Montgomery. "Now I know what to look for and how to respond."

Not so long ago, such educational opportunities were closed to support employees in this 19,500-student district.

But a three-year master contract ratified last summer by 550 members of the Pulaski Association of Support Staff (PASS) changed all that.

Now support employees—in titles ranging from secretary to warehouse attendant—are paid $3 per clock hour, up to 150 hours per year, for completion of professional growth courses.

That benefit has spawned a virtual ESP university in the district, with evening classes taught by district teachers and support staff, plus instructors from the local community college, vo-tech school, and University of Arkansas Medical Center.

Overseeing this growing institution is a Professional Growth Committee that Connie Montgomery chairs.

The panel—staffed by three paraeducators, a nurse, an administrator, and a school board member—is one tough gatekeeper.

Panel members interview prospective instructors, comb through their syllabi to determine if there's enough material for a 45-hour course, coordinate the schedule, and enforce stringent course guidelines.

The result: a thick course book that touches many phases of ESP employment.

Support staff, often joined by teachers, are studying subjects like attention deficit disorder, keyboarding, computer applications, the Internet, multicultural curriculum, drugs in school, teaching students to read phonetically, basic medicine, and bus driver safety (taught by drivers Becky Stainaker and Javonna Bernett).

And there are courses in the catalog that help make Pulaski County support staff better school citizens—teaching them how to analyze the district's finances and exercise their rights and responsibilities under the Association's master contract.

The master contract course, taught by Association President Sandy Haw-kins and Vice President Laura Montgomery, "is getting more members involved in our NEA affiliate as reps and executive board and district committee members," Hawkins boasts. "We're real proud of ourselves as a local."

But, in this and other evening classes now open to Pulaski support staff, there's something more *powerful* on tap than knowledge itself.

"Support staff in these classes are gaining more respect from teachers," Montgomery explains.

"Teachers are seeing educational support personnel not just doing their day-to-day duties," she says, "but getting out, building their minds, and bringing what they learn back to school to help teachers cope with today's students and teach kids what they're expected to know."

For More Information

Call Pulaski (Arkansas) Association Support Staff President Sandy Hawkins at 501/374-4955.

Ben Klain

Education support employee Connie Montgomery, right, and another student in her adult education class on at-risk kids tour the Centers for Youth and Families in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Bottom Line

Idealistic youth: What do the first graduates of the new millennium want from life? A new national survey on the college Class of 2001 finds that two-thirds of the prospective grads want to do work that "gives me the opportunity to help others."

Exercise not: Only 15 percent of 12th grade boys—and just 11 percent of senior girls—attend physical education classes daily, according to the U.S. Surgeon General's office. Illinois is the only state that mandates daily K-12 phys ed.

Mandatory uniforms: The latest big school district to mandate school dress is San Antonio. Starting next fall, the Texas district's 60,000 students will be obliged to wear khaki pants, shorts, or skirts.

Support for homework: Adults in America are the world's biggest believers in homework. According to a new international poll, 78 percent of Americans consider homework an essential school practice. No other industrial nation cracks the 70 percent level.

On Capital Hill

Getting the Wrong Idea?

Don't believe the rumors. This revised law *can* make classroom inclusion of the disabled work.

This spring, the U.S. Department of Education will release implementing regulations for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, expanded and improved by Congress last year. If you've heard that the new IDEA is a bad idea, get the facts before you react.

Don Stevenson

Don't jump to conclusions. Find out more about the new rules on working with students with disabilities.

Does the new IDEA mean more meetings for general ed teachers and more paperwork for everybody?

No. "Those who make that claim don't realize that IDEA regulations haven't even been finalized," says Ed Amundson, a special ed teacher who chairs NEA's Caucus for Educators of Exceptional Children.

In comments on the proposed new regs, NEA has stressed that general ed teachers should not be forced to participate in individual education plan (IEP) meetings if, in their professional judgment, they don't need to be there. Moreover, the law was rewritten to reduce paperwork, not pile it on.

Does IDEA now make it harder to discipline students with disabilities?

On the contrary. When the new regs are in place, school personnel will be able to change a disabled student's placement for up to 45 days—the previous maximum was 10 days—"if that student has brought a weapon to school, or knowingly possesses or uses illegal drugs, or sells or solicits the sale of a controlled substance while at school or a school function."

And now a district hearing officer may change a student's placement for up to 45 days if he or she is likely to harm himself, herself, or others.

Is this new law just about discipline and meetings?

Not by a long shot. It's about issues like more training for teachers and support staff who work with special needs kids, added funding for districts with a higher proportion of IDEA students, a voice for general ed teachers and support staff in the IEP process, and better, earlier, planning for students' transition to the job market.

Does IDEA add to workload and responsibilities?

When properly implemented, the law will enable a general ed teacher working with special needs students to advocate at IEP meetings for resources needed to make inclusion work—from more paraeducators to more training—and learn more about students' disabilities. In addition, teachers will be able to call for a new IEP meeting any time they need added support.

What if administrators don't like IEP team proposals that could cost more money?

You have allies to turn to—from parents to your state education department and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights.

And if you have collective bargaining rights, you may be able to negotiate for better support and conditions in the inclusive classroom. For appropriate advice, contact your NEA local or state affiliate *first*.

What about language in IDEA that just isn't clear?

In comments on proposed IDEA rules, NEA has called for clarification of terms—and stronger language in areas like paraprofessional duties, non-replacement of professional staff, support staff participation in IEP meetings, and training and technical assistance for support personnel.

Why was this law passed?

Before IDEA was passed in 1977, students with disabilities were denied educational opportunities or hidden in state institutions. IDEA now guarantees their civil right to a publicly funded education.

For More Information

For more on IDEA, point your Web browser to www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/IDEA/ or contact Ed Amundson, chair of the NEA Caucus for Educators of Exceptional Children, at NEASeeker@aol.com, 916/447-2531, or Fax 916/452-4675.

We Helped Write This Law

NEA lobbyists used real stories from school employees when pushing for changes last year in the reauthorized—expanded and improved—Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.

Congress paid attention. Among other things, the new IDEA:

- Requires individual education plans (IEP) to include a list of supplementary aids and services needed by the child, as well as program modifications or support needed by school staff.
- For the first time, specifies that general education teachers be able to participate in the IEP process and in the determination of behavioral interventions, where appropriate.
- Places greater emphasis on training for all personnel who work with students with disabilities.
- Creates new federal technical assistance programs to provide assistance, research, and "best practices" information to local school districts.

Federal Budget Update

Unfortunately, President Clinton's proposed Fiscal Year 1999 budget freezes federal IDEA funding at the current level—along with appropriations for core programs like voc ed and Title I Basic Grants, while cutting Impact Aid. In fact, the GOP proposes fuller IDEA funding.

On the plus side, Clinton calls for a new program that would provide subsidies for $22 billion of zero-interest school modernization bonds, as well as $7.5 billion in tobacco-settlement funding to hire 100,000 new teachers.

Overall, Clinton is proposing an 8.9 percent increase in Department of Education funding and a 5.9 percent increase in the department's discretionary—non-entitlement—funds.

What you can do: Urge federal lawmakers to support $22 billion in subsidies for school modernization, back the President's teacher hiring initiative, and call for increased funding for core programs like IDEA and Title I.

Parent involvement: Elementary schools in the Southeast states report the nation's lowest rates of parent attendance at open houses. About one-quarter of parents attend open houses in the South, compared to two-thirds outside the region.

Language help: Slightly over half the nation's elementary schools enroll students from families with limited English. Some two-thirds of these schools, says the U.S. Department of Education, translate school newsletters and notices for non-English speakers.

Language study: Some 53 percent of American adults rank the teaching of foreign languages as an essential school priority. The most important subject? Ninety-six percent of Americans rank mathematics as "very important."

Confidence in public schools: About 80 percent of French adults have confidence that important subjects are taught well in French secondary schools. The current confidence rate in the United States: 61 percent.

Around the World

A Chance To Speak Out

Education International is a core organizer of the Global March Against Child Labor, which kicked off in January.

Three groups of protesters are winding their way across five continents—where demonstrations and advocacy campaigns await—and will converge on Geneva just before a June conference on a new worldwide standard on child labor.

If you think children don't belong at work, join the march in May when it reaches the United States. Call 202/347-3817, Fax 202/347-4885, Web: www.globalmarch.org.

Burma: A Pariah Regime

In Burma, children and pregnant women have been forced into slave labor to work as army porters, construction workers on tourist industry projects, and more.

Overseeing this misery is the military-backed State Law and Order Restoration Council, which refused to install a democratically elected parliament in 1990 and now rules Burma with an iron hand.

In Orwellian fashion, this junta has renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council. But its tactics remain unchanged, earning it economic sanctions from the United States and European Union.

To date, the SPDC has:

- Shut down universities to deter student protests.
- Sent in troops to repress minority populations—through forced labor, torture, rape, murder, and exile to camps in neighboring Thailand and Bangladesh.
- Placed Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, chair of Burma's largest democratic party, under house arrest—and locked up hundreds of political prisoners, including trade union leaders and 29 elected members of parliament.

U.S. sanctions against Burma range from suspension of economic aid to a ban on new investment. In January, NEA President Bob Chase urged President Clinton to "strictly enforce and expand sanctions against this autocratic government."

Child Abuse On a Grand Scale

Child labor is undergoing international scrutiny. Two NEA activists are helping make that happen.

The United Nations-affiliated International Labor Organization (ILO) calls it the "most important source of child exploitation and abuse in the world today" and estimates that it has ensnared some 250 million kids worldwide.

It's child labor—everything from firing ceramics in southern India to picking blueberries in southern New Jersey—and it's spreading like cancer.

Human rights activist Mary Swenson, of the non-profit Resource Center of the Americas, sadly reports that child labor has "increased dramatically over the last 10 years in Central America and Mexico, especially among teenagers who lie about their age to work in clothing factories."

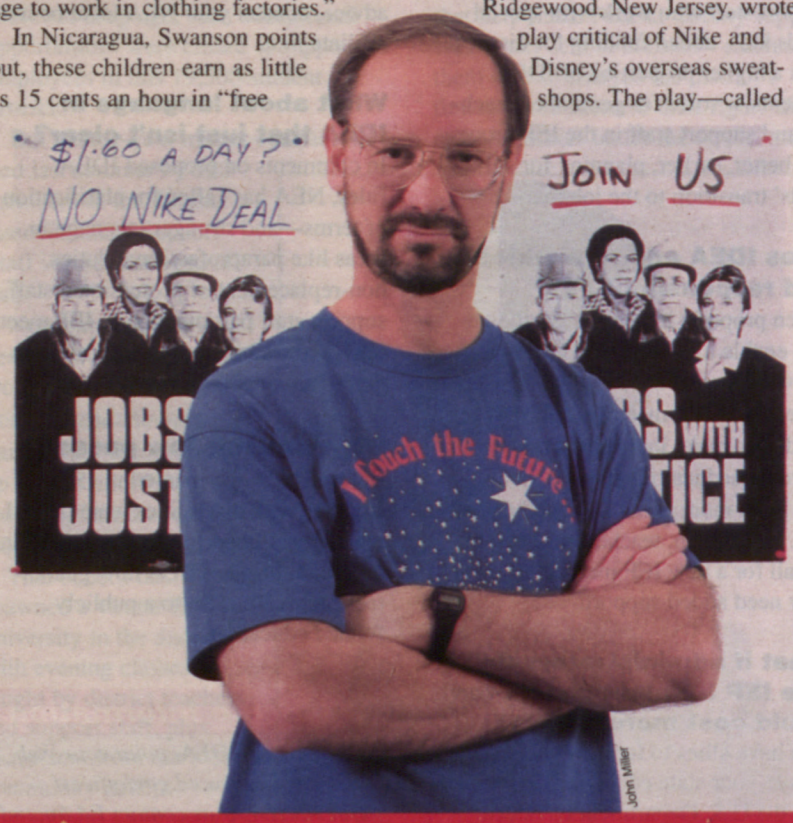
In Nicaragua, Swanson points out, these children earn as little as 15 cents an hour in "free trade zone" plants that produce jeans, mostly for export to the United States.

The news gets worse—even respected brands like Nike and Disney have blundered into the low-age, low wage trap. But the child labor issue is about to undergo more public scrutiny.

Later this year, ILO delegates in Geneva will debate a proposed new international child labor "convention," or standard, aimed at ending "the most intolerable forms of child exploitation" in the workplace—in everything from forced labor and the sex trade to "dangerous and hazardous work."

This worldwide attention to a worldwide crisis will bolster activists like Swenson—who last year drew 200 Minnesota public school students to a child labor conference—and NEA teacher members Maria Sweeney and Dave Zabor, both strong opponents of sweatshops and child labor.

Last year, Sweeney's fourth grade class at Hawes Elementary in Ridgewood, New Jersey, wrote a play critical of Nike and Disney's overseas sweatshops. The play—called *Justice. Do It.*—was banned by administrators. But in late October, a sympathetic Broadway producer brought the play to Times Square for one night—to a sold-out audience.



Arizona elementary teacher Dave Zabor works with other unions to end global sweatshops and child labor. "I see a connection between teaching and social justice," he says.

Sweeney, who does "a lot of labor history stuff" in a class heavy on reading and writing, has now started an after-school club for fourth and fifth graders. The club's focus: global sweatshops and child labor.

Sure, Sweeney has taken flack from some parents. Yet she stands her ground, respond to critics, and teaches a class so popular that interested students must be turned away.

Both Sweeney and Zabor, a resource teacher for gifted elementary students and treasurer of the Kyrene (Arizona) Education Association, encourage students to look beyond child labor to economic and social justice.

But for the students of both, child labor is the flashpoint.

Zabor, an activist who leaflets stores that sell sweatshop-made Guess jeans and pressures Arizona State University to back away from an endorsement deal with Nike, says his students have "powerful" reactions to photos of their peers working in factories.

"It's a no-brainer that children care about this issue," adds Sweeney. "Kids always care about other kids."

Says Zabor: "Child labor is denying children opportunities for their whole lives. If they're working, they're not getting educated, and I look at education as power, as access to a better life.

"Children who are forced to work are in no position to advocate for their rights," Zabor adds. "That's what exploitation is all about—and that's where our role comes in."

For More Information

For more on child labor and sweatshops, visit these Web home pages: National Labor Committee (www.nlcnet.org), UNITE (www.uniteunion.org), and Free the Children (www.freethechildren.org). To order a grade 8-12 child labor curriculum ($14.95), call the Resource Center of the Americas at 612/627-9445.

The Bottom Line

Driving and drinking: Educational campaigns against teen driving are making a significant impact, says the insurance Research Council. Just 18 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds now admit driving after drinking. The 1985 figure: a frightening 48 percent.

Broken homes: A generation ago, in 1972, just under 9 percent of the nation's college freshmen came from households where parents were either divorced or separated. Last fall, 26 percent of incoming frosh grew up in a household where parents had split.

Starting fresh: Twenty percent of the nation's teachers began the current school year in a new assignment. Among America's 87,000 principals, 14 percent were new. Superintendents were more likely to stay put: Only 13 percent began the year in a new slot.

Law and order: The best way to fight crime? Expand early childhood programs, says a new report that quotes Winston-Salem Police Chief George Sweat: "Our fight against crime needs to start in the high chair, not wait for the electric chair."

In the States

Smaller Classes for Bigger Kids

Utah NEA members say smaller classes shouldn't just be for the smallest kids.

Educators at Dixon Middle School in Provo, Utah, have taken great pains to help their 690 seventh and eighth graders handle the tough transition from elementary school, the profound changes all adolescents go through, and the often-fragmented academic life that comes with a seven-period day.

Six years ago, they split students into six interdisciplinary teams, each served by four core subject teachers and a resource coordinator.

The teachers on interdisciplinary and elective teams have daily personal and collaborative planning time, allowing them to coordinate everything from curriculum to homework load. To help staffers work with Dixon's high number of special needs students, resource coordinators offer advice on modifying assignments.

Still, something is very wrong at Dixon. The average class size is 32 students. And Linda Williams's choral music classes range from a low of 33 kids to a high of 54.

"At this age, students demand a tremendous amount of attention," stresses principal Bob Gentry, a former science teacher who visits classes on a regular basis.

"And a great number of our kids are from dysfunctional homes," Gentry adds. "In a class of 30 to 35 individuals, teachers can't pay particular attention to these individuals, and they sometimes fall through the cracks."

That frustration is echoed by French and Russian teacher Pat Buckner.

"In smaller classes, you can stress the way the brain works or do problem- or inquiry-based learning," Buckner says. "In a large class, in a lot of cases, you become a crowd manager."

Welcome to the Utah that isn't in the ski brochures.

"Our middle schools are the most neglected in the state," notes Utah Education Association staffer Susan Kuziak. "Some have 1,200 to 1,500 students—and Utah's student-teacher ratios are highest of all in its middle schools."

What can be done? UEA members have focused their lobbying efforts on groundbreaking legislation that that would extend the state's current elementary class size reduction program to middle schools.

Unlike many education initiatives, this one's got bipartisan support.

The $13.6 million class size reduction bill was introduced by Republican state Representatives Lloyd Frandsen and Kevin Garn. And it's backed by Republican Governor Mike Leavitt as part of his three-year "middle school initiative."

That initiative also incorporates a bill, introduced by Republican state Senator David Steele, to create a 15-member task force to study middle school issues, including elementary school transition and the possibility of middle school certification.

"This is a very critical age for kids," says Gary Carlston, the governor's education deputy. "We can't just sit back and say they'll eventually get through it and get to high school. We need to do a lot to help them through these developmental years."

UEA members have been lobbying to keep the first-year appropriation for smaller class sizes above $13 million. But they've also been urging flexibility for school staff and parents to decide how to best spend that money.

To help make the point and push for smaller classes overall, teachers like Linda Williams, vice president of the Provo Education Association, have made frequent visits to the capitol to speak to lawmakers, while colleagues back home have fired off thousands of E-mail messages.

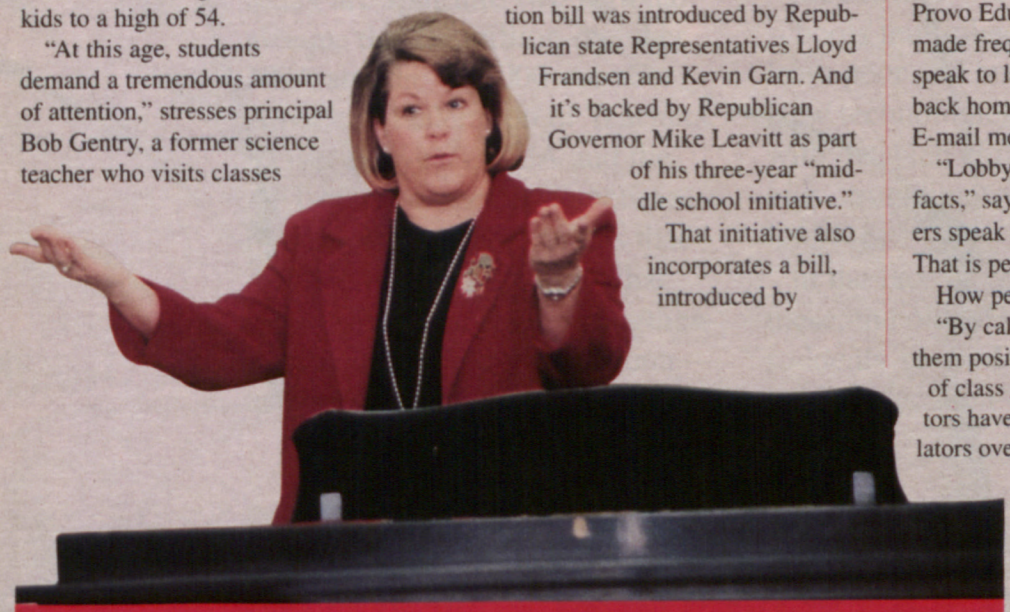
"Lobbyists can lobby and give the facts," says UEA's Kuziak, "but teachers speak from the heart on the issues. That is persuasive."

How persuasive?

"By calling lawmakers and giving them positive input about the benefits of class size reduction, these educators have been able to convince legislators over time that this expenditure is worthwhile and necessary," notes UEA staffer Kuziak.

"We anticipate this class size reduction bill will pass," he adds, "although there are still questions about whether it will receive adequate funding."

Stay tuned.



Steve Wilson

Facing Linda Williams in her middle school choral music classes are from 33 to as many as 54 students. That has prompted this NEA activist to personally lobby Utah legislators for class size reduction.

For More Information

For more on the situation in Provo, call Dixon assistant principal Peggy Roland at 801/374-4980 or Fax 801/374-4884. For more on legislative developments in Utah, point your Web browser to www.utea.com/.

Highways to Nowhere?
In his January State-of-the-State address, Utah Governor Mike Leavitt called for $152 million in new funding for education—for everything from technology to adult ed.

Challenging those who think that money might be better spent on highway construction, Leavitt said: "What we cannot do is shortchange education. Our children will travel those roads to the future, but if it comes at the expense of their schooling, we've taken away their destination."

Give'r a Research Grant
Given his push for lower class sizes, Utah Governor Leavitt might have advice for fellow Republican Peggy Johnson, chair of the House Education Committee in Washington State—which has the nation's fourth-highest class sizes.

In a chat with the *Seattle Times*, Shelton said, "There is this notion around the country that class size will make a big difference in education. It's not borne out by studies anywhere."

Yet four days before this interview, the San Juan Unified School District in Sacramento, California, released a study showing that a reduction in grade 1-3 class sizes has produced significant gains in math and reading scores and a decline in disciplinary suspensions.

Advice From the Experts
In Wyoming, the state's own consultants have stressed that class size is the single most significant factor in improving student achievement—recommending class sizes of 16 at the elementary level, 20 for middle/junior high, and 17 for high school. But policymakers there have balked at the cost.

Pretty shortsighted. Through manageable class sizes, says Wyoming Education Association President Jean Hayek, "students benefit from individual instruction, more opportunities for participation, lessons that encourage higher level thinking, and fewer behavior distractions."

Union doctors: The California Medical Association will vote this May on a proposal to create a union subsidiary that would bargain collectively for doctors. A "yes" vote would make the California group the first professional medical society to unionize.

Mean to moms: A new comparison of maternity benefits in 152 countries says no industrialized nation in the world offers new moms a worse deal than the United States. Eighty percent of all the nations studied guarantee women paid maternity leave.

Where the jobs are: Nearly half the jobs created in America over the past four decades are situated in office settings, making desk jobs the fastest-growing sector of the economy. In all, office-sited work now employs 41 percent of the workforce.

Up in smoke: The pending national settlement with the tobacco industry will funnel the federal government $30.5 billion over five years. Medicare, says a new study, will spend $186 billion in the same period to treat tobacco-related diseases.

This may be
the land of plenty, but
there's something
Americans, especially
teenagers, aren't getting
enough of – calcium.
This could lead to
osteoporosis. So what's
the best way to
load up on calcium?
Drink lowfat or
fat free milk. We always
keep a full thermos
in the cabinet.
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A Special Report on the AFT/NEA Unity Negotiations

One Organization For All America's Educators?

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15 Answers to Your Questions

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In 1857, a handful of teachers dedicated to the ideal of public education gathered in Philadelphia. Their goal: an organization that could unite educators the nation over.

One organization did evolve from that gathering, our modern NEA. But the initial dream—a single national organization—remains unrealized. Educators today are split into two national groups, the 2.3 million-member NEA and the 950,000-member American Federation of Teachers.

Over the years, NEA and the AFT have competed, sometimes bitterly, in countless battles that devoured dollars and time that could have been spent strengthening the profession of education—and the education of kids.

At times, the two groups did try to end this wasteful competition, with little success. Each was too set in its ways. But times change.

In the 1980s, powerful political figures began to question America's historic commitment to public education. Proposals to subsidize private schools with public tax dollars proliferated in state after state.

Meanwhile, pressures on public schools multiplied. More students from poor and broken homes. New technologies. Classrooms with disabled children. Immigrant kids struggling to master a new language.

In the face of challenges like these, the old NEA-AFT rivalry suddenly seemed a luxury that public education—and kids—could no longer afford.

In 1995, delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly called merger between NEA and AFT "essential" to educator unity and sent NEA negotiators to the bargaining table.

These negotiators are now close to completing a unity proposal for consideration this July by delegates to the 1998 NEA Representative Assembly.

Should this proposal be adopted? This special section can help you decide. We invite you to read this coverage, talk about it with colleagues, and work toward an informed decision.

Next month's *NEA Today* will feature follow-up coverage, including feedback pro and con from an array of NEA members.

The NEA Negotiating Team in the Unity Talks

Bob Chase *President, NEA, a Connecticut social studies teacher*

Reg Weaver *Vice President, NEA, an Illinois science teacher*

Dennis Van Roekel *Secretary-Treasurer, NEA, an Arizona math teacher*

Lee Ann Prielipp *President, Washington Education Association, a reading-English teacher*

Gregory Nash *President, NEA-New York, a teacher with at-risk youth*

Aaron Wallace *President, Florida Teaching Profession-NEA, elementary special ed teacher*

Pat Matosky-Lekan *Member, NEA Board of Directors, an Ohio school food service employee*

Ernest Therrien *Member, NEA Board of Directors, a Massachusetts college professor*

Don Cameron *Executive Director, NEA*

Evelyn Temple *Assistant Executive Director, NEA*

Toward Principles of Unity

The Goal of Unity: A More Effective, Not Just a Larger, Organization

On what basis should NEA and the AFT unite?

Negotiators from the two organizations are close to completing Principles of Unity that define a single, new organization that's meant to be better, not just bigger, than either NEA or the AFT alone.

Below: a summary of the key principles where negotiators have reached conceptual agreement.

The Principles of Unity will develop these areas of agreement in much greater detail. You'll be able to read these Principles, once completed, on the Internet, at www.nea.org/unity.

Printed copies of the completed Principles of Unity will also be available for review at all NEA UniServ offices.

Education employees will be the core constituency of the new united organization.
Men and women in every category of employment in public education and education-related public agencies and institutions, from pre-school through graduate school and lifetime learning, would be eligible for membership.

The united organization will reflect a deep commitment to democratic procedures—at every level.
Members would run the organization, and the delegates they elect to the organization's convention, on a one-person, one-vote basis, would constitute the organization's highest decision-making body.

These delegates would elect, by secret ballot, all national officers.

State and local affiliates will be the foundation of the new united organization.
All current NEA and AFT affiliates would become affiliates of the united new organization.

The ultimate objective would be to have one state affiliate in each state. But the creation of a new, unified national organization would not require the unification of existing NEA and AFT state affiliates.

A current NEA state affiliate could choose to unite with its current AFT state counterpart or remain separate.

The new united organization will be committed to building an effective, modern labor movement presence in American life.
The well-being of America's children and families demands the economic and social justice that only a strong, democratic labor movement can provide. To help build this labor movement, the new united organization would be affiliated with the AFL-CIO at the national level.

The new united organization would encourage all local and state affiliates to also affiliate with the AFL-CIO, but affiliates would make their own decisions.

The new united organization will help affiliates maintain and improve the quality of services they deliver to members.
Financial support from the national level would be distributed by a formula keyed to the number of members in a servicing unit, just as financial support from the national level is distributed in the current NEA UniServ program.

The total number of positions supported through the NEA UniServ program and the comparable program run by AFT would continue to be supported and maintained in the new united organization.

The new united organization will respect the diversity of educators and work to build an organization that actively involves all members.
The organization would maintain—and expand—current AFT and NEA levels of minority representation throughout leadership, governance, and staff.

The organization will work to end discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status, and physical disability.

Negotiating teams from NEA and the AFT have just about completed a proposal to unite the two organizations. In July, the proposal—in the form of "Principles of Unity"—will come before delegates to both the NEA and AFT conventions.

A United Organization Q&A

What difference would unity make?

NEA members can thrive only if public education thrives—if public schools are trusted and supported by the American people.

Today, that trust is strained. Many Americans believe that public schools are failing and don't deserve support, and they will continue to believe this—because some public schools *are* failing, mostly schools in poor communities where the social safety net has torn and children are falling through the holes.

Those hostile to public education use failing schools to justify all sorts of proposals to funnel public tax dollars into private schools, proposals that endanger public schools in *all* communities.

Many large urban school systems are staffed by AFT members, with the surrounding suburbs staffed by NEA members. By uniting, educators would send the message that every child's future is every American's business, whether that American lives in inner-city poverty or suburban security.

The AFT/NEA rivalry has diverted attention—and resources—away from serving children. Unity would end this waste of resources and make every dues dollar count for schools and students.

Would unity mean higher dues?

The dues NEA members currently pay are based upon separate calculations made at the national, state, and local level. National-level NEA dues are keyed to the nation's average teacher and support staff salaries and only rise if these averages rise.

With or without unity, these dues will increase only if average salaries increase.

NEA and AFT members currently pay just about the same annual national dues, $109 in NEA and $114 in AFT. The national dues for educational support staff are $56.50 in NEA, $57 in AFT.

State and local affiliates of the united new organization would set their own dues, just as they do now in both NEA and AFT. These levels vary across the country.

What would happen to UniServ staff if unity took place?

The NEA UniServ program moves national dues dollars back to the local level to help fund the cost of staff who deliver services directly to members. The new organization would continue to provide this funding support, and no current NEA affiliates would see a decrease in their UniServ staff allocations.

Would NEA members lose any current services after unity?

No. Joining NEA and AFT together would produce economies of scale that would enable services to be enhanced, not reduced.

Just one example: By mailing membership publications to one, single list of members—instead of two—the united new organization would qualify for postal discounts worth many thousands of dollars a year.

What impact would unity have on membership status in states?

Some NEA state affiliates currently do not extend full membership rights to education support personnel. Support personnel will enjoy full rights at every level of the united new organization.

Would the united organization have term limits for officers?

That decision would be made by delegates to the organization's convention soon after the second round of officer elections. In the first round of elections, officers would be elected to four-year terms. These officers could then run for re-election.

Shortly after the second round of elections, convention delegates would decide—by simple majority vote—whether to limit officers to three four-year terms. At the same time, delegates would determine whether the organization should hold its conventions every two years.

Will the united organization organize private school teachers?

The united organization will not organize private school employees. But the organization will organize in educational settings where traditional distinctions between public and nonpublic education have blurred.

Public tax dollars, for example, directly fund staff who provide compensatory education services in nonpublic schools. The united organization will represent, in situations like these, teachers and other staff whose salaries are funded by public tax dollars, not private tuitions.

Would people who don't work in education be allowed in the united organization?

Yes, in two different circumstances. First, students studying to become educators and educators who have retired would be welcome and valued members.

Second, professionals and technical staff within state and local government and health care would also be eligible.

AFT currently represents about 85,000 such employees. Some work in educational settings, and some do not.

Within NEA, state employees who work in educational settings—prison staff who tutor, for example—are eligible for membership, and NEA represents about 36,000 of these employees.

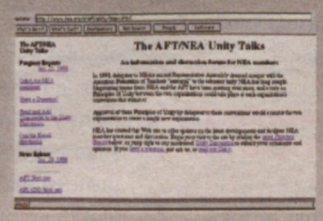
NEA state affiliates also represent about 40,000 additional men and women who work in state and local government and health care but are not directly involved in education.

Do NEA and the AFT have the same positions on public education issues?

NEA and the AFT share the same positions on public education. The AFL-CIO's education policy mirrors these positions. The special NEA Web page on the unity talks includes the complete text of AFT and AFL-CIO education issue policies. Check www.nea.org/unity.

Jose Di Dio

Wanted: Your Questions and Opinions



Want to learn more about prospects for AFT/NEA unity? Have questions you would like to ask? Interested in discussing the issues around unity with fellow NEA members?

You can find the information and the discussion opportunities you want 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on a special site NEA has created on the World Wide Web.

Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/unity**, and you'll be able to download detailed information, raise questions, and debate issues.

What Happens Next?

Unification Would Take Several Years To Implement

What would the passage of the proposed Principles of Unity this summer actually mean?

Approval of these Principles of Unity—by delegates to this summer's NEA and AFT conventions—would commit the two organizations to create a single new organization.

What would the name of the new united organization be?

The negotiators haven't spent any time trying to figure out a name. For now, they refer to the new group as simply the "United Organization." The actual name would be chosen down the road, when NEA and AFT convention delegates vote on a Constitution and Bylaws for the United Organization.

Joe Di Dio

Joe Di Dio

NEA President Bob Chase from Connecticut and AFT President Sandra Feldman from New York are leading their respective teams in the AFT/NEA unity talks.

When would the vote on a Constitution and Bylaws take place?

No earlier than the NEA Representative Assembly in July 1999.

If two-thirds of the delegates to the July 1998 NEA RA vote "yes" on the Principles of Unity—and if delegates to the July AFT convention also vote "yes"—NEA and the AFT will form a broadly representative committee to draft a Constitution and Bylaws.

These documents would then go before NEA and AFT convention delegates and have to be approved before the United Organization could come into existence.

What happens to AFT and NEA state affiliates that want to unite before a Constitution is ready for a vote?

If the Principles of Unity are approved this July by delegates to both the NEA and AFT conventions, existing AFT and NEA state affiliates will be free to unite at the state level, provided these mergers are approved by the AFT and NEA.

In Minnesota, for instance, the state's NEA and AFT affiliates have already completed a unification agreement that has been approved by representative bodies in both organizations. The only hold-up to the formal creation of a single organization for educators in Minnesota is the lack of a unity pact at the national level.

When would the new organization actually be ready to begin operations?

That will depend, first, on when a Constitution and Bylaws for the new United Organization are approved.

By the year 2002, NEA and the AFT would likely cease to exist as separate entities.

A United Labor Movement: A Background Primer on the AFL-CIO

The American Federation of Teachers is currently an affiliate of the AFL-CIO, and, under the Principles of Unity between NEA and AFT, the united new organization would affiliate with the AFL-CIO at the national level.

Just what is the AFL-CIO? Here's a basic primer.

What does "AFL-CIO" stand for?

The AFL-CIO began in 1955 when the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), the two national labor federations then existing, joined to form a single national labor center.

How many members does the AFL-CIO have?

The AFL-CIO has affiliates, not individual members. The 72 unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO have 13 million members.

What authority does the AFL-CIO have over affiliated unions?

None. The AFL-CIO is a voluntary federation of autonomous unions that work together to improve the well-being of America's working families. Each individual union affiliated with the AFL-CIO controls its own affairs.

Are there professionals in AFL-CIO-affiliated unions?

Yes, there are now more than 4 million professional employees in AFL-CIO affiliated unions, and the number is growing. These professionals include doctors, scientists, engineers, and technicians employed by local and state governments as well as professionals in health care and other private industries. To serve the needs of the professionals who belong to affiliated unions, the AFL-CIO has created a Professional Employee Department.

Who currently pays dues to the AFL-CIO?

No union members, as individuals, pay dues to the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO's affiliated unions, as organizations, send the AFL-CIO a per capita payment based on their number of members. The current "per cap" is 45 cents per member per month.

Who elects the leaders of the AFL-CIO?

The three AFL-CIO executive officers and the members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council are elected by delegates to the AFL-CIO convention. This convention is composed of delegates from the affiliated unions. The convention is held every two years, and officers are elected every four years.

How many women and minorities currently sit on the AFL-CIO Executive Council?

The Council includes three national officers and 51 vice presidents. Of the three national officers, one is a minority woman. The vice presidents include seven women and 10 minorities.

Who sets AFL-CIO policy?

The AFL-CIO convention decides the Federation's policies. Between conventions, the AFL-CIO Executive Council is empowered to set policies on matters not considered by the conventions.

Is AFL-CIO policy binding on affiliated unions?

No. In only one area have the unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO ceded limited authority to the AFL-CIO: in the settling of jurisdictional disputes between unions.

What happens if the AFL-CIO endorses one candidate for political office and an affiliated union another?

Affiliated unions can support any political candidate they choose. AFL-CIO affiliates are autonomous and answerable only to their own members.

Can a union in the AFL-CIO "raid" another AFL-CIO union for more members?

No. The AFL-CIO Constitution prohibits such raiding. Membership disputes still arise, of course, and the AFL-CIO has created a mechanism for settling disputes between affiliated unions.

Why do unions join the AFL-CIO?

The prime reason hasn't changed since working people in America first sought to create a national labor center over a century ago: Because the challenges facing working men and women in America are bigger than any one union.

For more information, check the World Wide Web at www.aflcio.org.

Nevada teacher Benjamin Gonzalez leads an innovative program that inspires tomorrow's teachers to learn today. Want to see the face of education's future? Turn to page 23.

Jim Decker

Innovators

An Alternative to Violence

Innovator:
Linda Lantieri

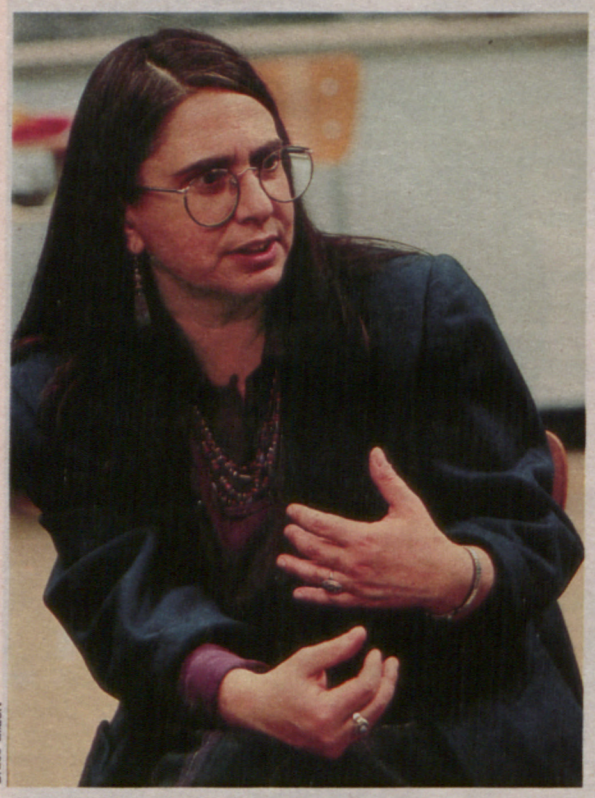
Job:
Co-founder and director, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program National Center, based in New York City

Bright Idea:
Shoving, fist fights, and weapons have become familiar ways that students resolve disputes.

But 360 schools across the country —some 155,000 students and 5,100 educators—have now committed to changing how they deal with conflict in all aspects of their lives.

That's because Lantieri has introduced conflict resolution through nonviolence into the traditional academic curriculum.

"We work with adults, students, and parents, giving them skills in managing emotions, resolving conflicts, and interrupting prejudice," says Lantieri, who has spent decades dealing with education issues.



Bruce Gilbert

Thirteen years ago, Lantieri teamed up with colleague Tom Roderick to start the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, a collaboration between the New York City public schools and an organization called Educators for Social Responsibility.

"It was a preventive response to systematically address young people's emotional and social development" says Lantieri, then a curriculum specialist at the New York Central Board of Education.

The program started in three schools in Brooklyn and became an instant success. In 1993, Lantieri devoted herself full-time to expanding the program to the national level.

Calvin Jones, a 10th grader, says the program "taught me how to deal with people using my communication skills—having them understand you, and you understand them back. Now I'm more open.

"I used to get high on doing bad things," he adds, "and now it's a different kind of high. It's being nice to people and having people like me back."

Impact:
An independent study in 1990 revealed that 71 percent of teachers participating saw a reduction in fighting in their classrooms, 66 percent said verbal putdowns decreased, and 78 percent said caring increased.

A recent three-year evaluation of the program, sponsored in part by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sampled more than 8,000 students in 15 schools. The study revealed that student participation in the program slows the growth of aggressive tendencies that lead to violence and anti-social behavior.

The program has produced the first master's degree program in education with a specialty in conflict resolution and peaceable schools at Lesley College, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

For More:
For information on the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, call 212/509-0022 or visit the Web at www.benjerry.com/esr/index.html.

The Cure

Safe Passage: Making It through Adolescence in a Risky Society *by Joy Dryfoos (Oxford, $27.50). Dryfoos, an education writer, examines successful programs dealing with adolescents and issues like drug abuse and teen pregnancy. She argues that for school prevention curriculums to work, we must "liberate the teachers."*

"Schools are currently overloaded with prevention curriculums that have very little behavioral impact. One reason for that massive and expensive failure is the reliance on classroom teachers to implement these curriculums.

Teachers should be released from the responsibility of having to provide sex education, substance-abuse prevention, conflict resolution, and whatever else comes along. . . .

This training should be offered by health educators and other practitioners who are equipped to counsel young people and can refer them to specialized help if they need it. . . .

Teachers need to concentrate on their jobs—developing strong cognitive skills among their students."

Standards Practice

Innovator:
Debra Wimbush

Job:
Elementary teacher, McKinley Community School, McKinley, New Jersey. Teacher-in-residence, Educational Testing Services.

Bright Idea:
Teachers have always set standards for their students. Now, they're setting standards for themselves.

Last year, the Educational Testing Services chose Wimbush, a 20-year classroom veteran, to help prepare materials that would help teachers gain certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

"National certification is an assessment developed by teachers for teachers," says Wimbush. "Who better to help train for this assessment than teachers who are in the trenches everyday? Involving teachers who are in the classroom daily brings authenticity to the training process."

As a teacher-in-residence, Wimbush is directly involved in creating exercises for prospective certification candidates. She peruses prompts from previous years—revising, changing, and developing new ones.

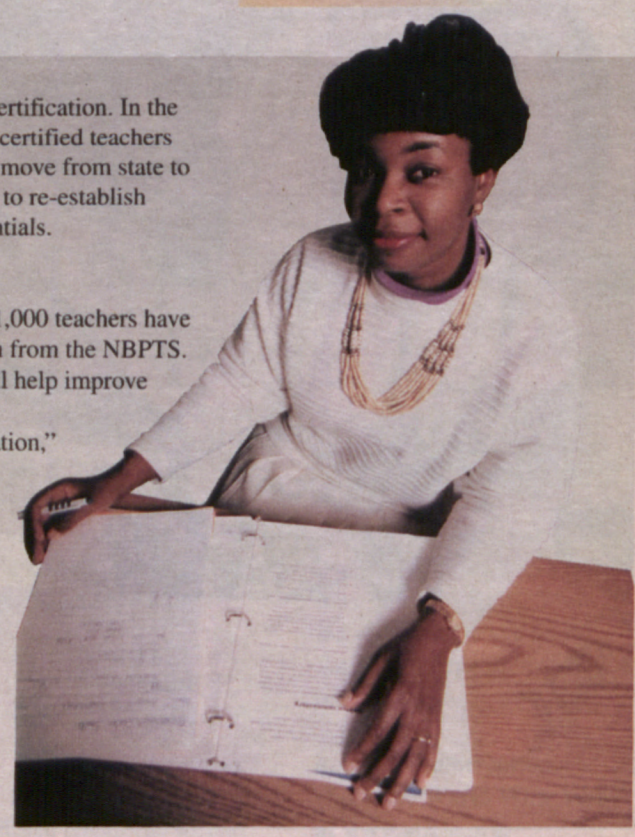
Wimbush's other duties at ETS include developing portfolios to help teachers reflect on personal and professional development, including parent and community involvement.

In addition, she gives outreach presentations, telling teachers about eligibility for assessment and the benefits of teacher certification. In the future, for example, certified teachers may find it easier to move from state to state without having to re-establish their teaching credentials.

Impact:
To date, fewer than 1,000 teachers have received certification from the NBPTS. Wimbush's work will help improve the numbers.

"National certification," Wimbush notes, "certifies that a person is an accomplished teacher."

For More:
Contact Debra Wimbush at ETS, 800/799-3339, ext. 5414, or E-mail dwimbush@ets.org.



Norman Y. Lono

Bob Riha, Jr.

Helping Gay Students Be **Soul Survivors**

Innovator:
Virginia Uribe

Job:
Consultant, gay and lesbian issues, Los Angeles Unified School District. Founder and former director, Project 10, Fairfax High School, Los Angeles, California.

Bright Idea:
"Nothing—absolutely nothing—is more devastating to some parents than the news that their son or daughter is homosexual," says Uribe. "One parent captured the desolation so many parents feel when she said, 'I would rather have been told that my son has cancer.'

"We *must* help these parents."

Uribe is working to help educators, counselors, and administrators understand that when the issue is homosexuality, they have a responsibility to the parent as well as to the student.

To help these parents, Uribe wants to ensure that they have access to reading materials, to videos—and to other adults who will help them deal with the issues they face and not judge their reactions to their children.

Uribe is well acquainted with the issues surrounding gay and lesbian students.

In 1984, she founded a student program called Project 10 at Fairfax High to counter the most pernicious effects of homophobia.

The program promotes the development of school policies to protect gay and lesbian students, training for school personnel in suicide prevention and conflict resolution, school-based support groups for gays and lesbians, and access to materials on human sexuality.

Project 10, says Uribe, "was never a revolutionary undertaking. It was, at heart, a child-protection program.

"It grew out of the recognition that gay and lesbian students—in addition to living with intense loneliness, depressed self-esteem, systematic discrimination, and institutionalized prejudice—were increasingly the targets of physical violence."

Uribe attributes the success of Project 10 to its fidelity to the principle that the issue is equity: "Our aim was—and still is—to make schools safe places for gay and lesbian students."

Uribe insists that so long as homophobia is not only alive and active, but systematic and institutionalized, it corrodes the ideal of educational opportunity for all.

Impact:
Project 10 now extends throughout the L.A. Unified School District.

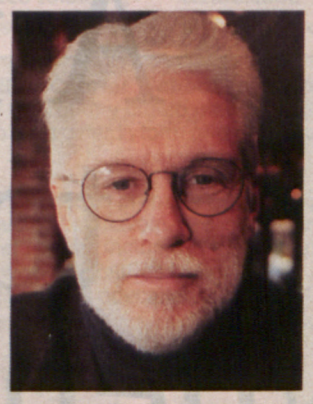
For More:
Contact Virginia Uribe at 626/577-4553 or send E-mail to CASHEGAIL@msn.com.

Professional Development: **Why It Counts**

Dennis Sparks is executive director of the National Staff Development Council, a non-profit educational association. He discussed professional development issues in a recent interview with the Michigan Education Association.

Any big misconceptions about staff development?
There's a view that if you have a college degree and graduate work, then you don't need to learn more. The fact is that most people get their graduate degrees early in their career.

And I've had a parent say to me that staff development is for teachers who aren't very good—so why do all teachers need it?



How has staff development changed?
The old kind of staff development was, and still is, dependent on release days for large groups of people. If you ask most teachers, they'd say it involves training events in which somebody stands up and tells teachers what they ought to be doing.

The new form of staff development is more often going to be smaller groups of teachers working together to make things better.

This doesn't preclude going to district meetings or national conferences. Every teacher ought to be going to these, because that's how you raise awareness and build a network you can use when you need to get help.

But a problem for many teachers now is that they have been limited to spending almost all of their work time with young people. They haven't had the privilege of sitting at a table and talking with a colleague.

What about development for support staff?
Upgrading of knowledge and skills is always important—learning new software programs or how to handle certain kinds of chemicals.

But non-certified staff are also often viewed as a learning resource for kids—I think of the bus driver whom I heard say, "My bus is the student's first classroom."

So what knowledge or skills should support staff have? They ought to feel that they're part of the academic mission of the school, and they need opportunities to upgrade their own knowledge and skills related to their own job.

Dennis Sparks is the co-author of A New Vision for Staff Development *($17.95) and* What Is Staff Development Anyway? *($7.50), both from the National Staff Development Council. Call 800/727-7288 to order.*

Guidelines for **Home Visits**

Young, at-risk children can greatly benefit from home visits. But research shows that to be worthwhile, home visits should follow these guidelines:

- Visitors should be flexible enough to meet with families whenever and wherever it is convenient. But they should also strive to schedule regular appointments.
- To spark conversations with parents, it's helpful to bring something that relates to the topic being discussed: a handout, book, or small toy for the child.
- Though the focus is the parent and the child, visitors should try to involve everyone in the home, such as a grandparent or older children.
- One of the best things home visitors can do for new parents is simply to listen.
- Visits should be discontinued if the visitor feels threatened. Visitors should also be instructed on how to respond—and when to report—suspected child abuse or drugs in the home.

Source: "House Calls," *Education Week*, February 11, 1998. On the Web at www.edweek.com.

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Inside Scoop

NEA Charter Schools Take Initiative

Last September, the new CIVA School in Colorado Springs, Colorado opened its doors to 140 students.

With its staff of 10, the CIVA School (CIVA stands for Character, Integrity, Vision, and the Arts) works on individual character development through intense family involvement and an interdisciplinary curriculum.

The CIVA School is a charter school—by definition, an autonomous, publicly funded, performance-based school that's free from many of the state and local rules governing other public schools.

And one of its main backers is the Colorado Springs Education Association.

Does NEA support charter schools?

NEA is interested in learning firsthand what it takes to make a successful charter school. What better way to lead in one of the hottest areas of school reform?

As for the law: NEA supports charter school legislation that's consistent with this country's commitment to free, universal public schools. The Association opposes charter school laws that promote the privatization of education.

So what's NEA doing in the area of charter schools?

In 1995, NEA launched its Charter School Initiative. Designed to assist members interested in working with their communities to create new public schools, the program has three schools now in operation—in Hawaii, Colorado, and Connecticut. Schools in Arizona and California are expected to open this coming fall.

The sites run the gamut, from elementary to high school, with programs that emphasize family involvement, interdisciplinary instruction, school-to-work components, and business and university partnerships.

The schools are open to all students, space permitting, including children in need of special education services.

What makes NEA-supported charter schools unique?

All NEA charter school sites focus on a commitment to strengthen public schools. And every site:

- Can rely on NEA for technical assistance with everything from curriculum development and fundraising to setting up the governance process.
- Recognizes the union and builds contractual rights into its charter. Typically, there are site-specific waivers, such as flexibility in working hours or differences in the evaluation process—all developed by charter staff.
- Places a high priority on time and opportunity for staff development and on sharing what's learned with other educators. To enhance the learning potential, NEA has hired a team of researchers from the Graduate School of Education at UCLA to assess the progress of all the charters.

How can a union support charter schools?

It might be better to ask: How can a union not take the lead?

This is a chance for educators "to use energy and innovation to get the taxpayers on our side," says Jan Noble, president of the Colorado Springs Education Association. "We have to prove public education is the best game in town."

With millions in federal money now available for charters, teachers need to be part of the action—to have a hand in defining educational reform.

This also fits with NEA's goal of creating school climates that make student achievement top priority.

Other unions are getting into the act. In California, the San Diego Labor Council has partnered with the local NEA Charter School Initiative site to offer apprenticeships and other opportunities for career exploration.

Who funds these schools—NEA or taxpayers?

Charters are publicly funded, but there's a continual search for additional funds to allow more than a bare-bones program.

NEA doesn't provide the money to start up these schools or keep them running. What the NEA Charter School Initiative program does do is help teachers learn entrepreneurial skills—that is, look at creative ways to market and fund their schools.

Careful budgeting, snagging grants, and searching for corporate sponsors become necessities.

Realistically, what else does it take to start a charter school?

The NEA Charter School Initiative has shown that a charter's "founding group" needs to have the ability and the time—sometimes more than two years—to create the kind of charter school that meets its community's needs.

In most cases, the members of the founding group—which can include teachers, parents, and business and labor representatives—have full-time jobs. They have to grab spare time for charter planning.

At the Connecticut site, for example, teachers taught in their old school through June 1997, while working to get their charter ready to open in a renovated former factory by August.

What stumbling blocks have NEA members encountered?

The process of creating a governing board can hit pitfalls as a charter moves from a less-structured founding group into a more formal setup.

Issues of parental control, community input, and the roles of teachers and administrators must be resolved.

And deciphering each state's particular maze of charter school regulations can be aggravating. At least 29 states, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, now have laws that allow for the creation of charter schools. During the process, local school boards have shown themselves to be both a help and a hindrance.

Are NEA charter schools worth all the headaches?

Educators at all five sites have been reinvigorated by the prospect of creating schools with the learning models and partnerships that they've always wanted to incorporate.

Neil Pettigrew, CIVA's math teacher, left his former high school because of deteriorating student behavior. At the other school, says Pettigrew, "I didn't see how things could get better. At CIVA, we are solving the problems together."

What's next?

NEA's immediate objectives are to sustain its five current charter school sites, make sure participants learn from one another, and train others in the best practices that emerge.

As part of a two-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, NEA—through NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education and SRI Inc.—is beginning a "cross-fertilization" project that will eventually involve collaboration between charter schools and other public schools. Such collaboration can ensure that the promise of charter schools to improve all of public education is fulfilled.

Marc Knapp, president of the San Diego Teachers Association, is active in launching the charter school there. He's clear about what needs to happen next.

"Charter schools can help us learn to do three things well," says Knapp. "Improve learning for all students, improve teaching, and more fully engage parents and the community."

The **NEA Charter School Initiative** is helping members across the country create new public schools. The five project sites to date differ in form and purpose, but they all are:

- Designed to promote high levels of achievement for all students, including those with disabilities or needing special education services.
- Structured to promote professional development opportunities for school staff.
- Developed in conjunction with community stakeholders.

Karren Loeb

Need More Information?

- For more information on the NEA Charter School Initiative or the five school sites currently backed by this program, contact Dr. Robert McClure of NEA's National Center for Innovation at 202/822-7926, E-mail: rmcclure@nea.org. Or contact Andrea diLorenzo of NEA's Center for the Advancement of Public Education at 202/822-7334 or E-mail: adilorenzo@nea.org.

Both can also be contacted by writing to NEA, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

Students &

Good Stuff

A New Alternative

Intervention without Drugs: A Focus on ADHD is the theme of the latest issue of *Reaching Today's Youth* (Winter 1998). Education specialists from around the country look at:

- How to define and accurately identify attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- The effectiveness of Ritalin and other stimulants.
- How to create schools and classrooms that deal effectively with the disorder.
- Alternative interventions—including exercise and conflict resolution.

Authors include Linda Lantieri of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program National Center (see Innovators, page 18).

Reaching Today's Youth, a quarterly, provides accessible, research-based strategies for educators working with children who are in conflict with their families, peers, or school.

Single copies are $12. A one-year subscription is $39. To order, contact the National Educational Service, P.O. Box 8, Station Z9, Bloomington, IN 47402-0008, 800/733-6786, Fax 812/336-7790, E-mail: nes@nes.org. On the Web at www.nes.org.

Incorporating the Internet

ICONnect, a Web site created by the American Association of School Librarians, provides instruction and guidance on incorporating the Internet into the school library with areas like "Online Courses" and "Curriculum Connections." Educators can also learn how to use the Internet for reference and classroom curriculum, and K-12 students can send direct E-mail inquiries to media librarians through KidsConnect. On the Web at www.ala.org/ICONN/index.html.

Today's Standards

Performance Assessment and Standards-Based Curricula: The Achievement Cycle provides practical tools that help educators use performance assessments effectively to meet current standards that are set by education agencies and discipline groups such as the National Council of Teachers of English. Paperback $29.95 plus $5 s&h from Eye on Education, 6 Depot Way West, Larchmont, NY 10538, 914/833-0551, Fax 914/833-0761.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"You're spending most of your time disciplining instead of teaching."

Betty Osche, elementary teacher aide, Cabot, Pennsylvania

Dilemma

Solitary Solutions

How do you pull a disruptive student back into the fold?

Ted Pitts

Every Friday, my seventh graders and I set up a circle of chairs for a class meeting. We respond to items that have been placed in the agenda can—a coffee can with a slot cut in the lid. All items must be signed.

The writer of the agenda item elaborates on the problem without using any names. The class discusses different points of view and brainstorms solutions. Then the owner of the agenda item chooses one solution to try.

This is an effective way for students to hear how their behavior is affecting others, without singling out anyone.

In fact, several students often speak out as "the person" causing the problem, because the discussions encourage everyone to examine their relationships with others.

When we check back on subsequent Fridays, the situation has almost always improved.

Karen Swann
Seventh grade teacher
Sedgwick, Maine

I question the disruptive student to find out what's wrong. The questions usually lead to circle time discussion, with the student seated next to me.

I encourage the disruptive student and classmates to ask questions and think of possible solutions for the one student's problem.

Using this Q&A strategy—and discussing why we have rules in the classroom—usually calms the disruptive student down. And all students learn that when faced with a problem, talk it out—don't act it out.

Sandra Land
Pre-K teacher
Buffalo, New York

I try to remember a positive event in which the student participated. I search for a connection between that event and the theme being discussed in class. Then I call on the student and ask that he or she explain the event.

The student feels important—and, because of the recognition, is converted into a positive member of the class.

Julitsa París Vélez
Science teacher
Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

Avoid a confrontation, if possible, by not giving the student the huge amount of attention that he or she is apparently demanding.

Rather, quietly invite the student for a conference sometime that day or the next. In a one-on-one conference, a student will sometimes readily admit a personal problem that really is the basis of the disruptive behavior.

My 48 years in the classroom have convinced me that this is worth a try.

Dale Faughn
High school biology teacher
Fredonia, Kentucky

My team teacher and I have been trained in Glasser's choice theory, so one of us talks to the student while the other continues with the class. We leave the class to give the student a little breathing room while we use a problem-solving approach to guide the student to a resolution.

Our students don't see this as punishment. They see it as a chance to work through their problems.

Belinda Blinzler
Multi-age teacher
Marshfield, Missouri

Give these children little jobs to do. They will be so busy helping and trying to please that they will forget about being bad.

Find their interests and work on that. Visit the home or have the parents in for a conference. The child is only doing this acting in class for attention.

Give these children love and praise when they do well. When they find that you're their friend, they will soon fall in line with the rest of the class.

Marjorie Friday
Retired teacher
Selma, Alabama

Got an Answer?

What do you do with students who don't complete their assignment in time for recess or a party?

Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org**.

Respondents published here will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug.

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Students keep talking about a topic even when they're outside the classroom."

Jim Duffy, high school U.S. history and American literature teacher, Sterling, Illinois

Delight

Training Tomorrow's Teachers

Nevada middle school students get more out of school when they go to the head of the class.

Ben Gonzalez's middle school students know the aggravation of dealing with a student who won't cooperate—and the joys of guiding a younger person to a high level of accomplishment.

These ten student tutors work with children from nearby C.D. Squires Elementary School—and they're part of a more ambitious program to "grow your own future teachers" at J.D. Smith Middle School in North Las Vegas, Nevada.

Three years ago, the Clark County Classroom Teachers Association, working in conjunction with district officials, concluded that all county schools had to intensify efforts to increase the representation of minority teachers within their ranks.

Working at a school with a student body that's 85 percent minority, the staff at J.D. Smith saw on their own campus a future corps of educators who could fit the bill.

But first, students had to be inspired to consider teaching as a future profession. What better way to do that, figured the school staff, than to help them experience firsthand the joys and frustrations that every teacher knows.

During the 1996-97 school year, faculty selected students who developed weekly lesson plans for four one-hour tutoring sessions per week. These students then reported back to their own teachers for a "debriefing" that focused on ways to improve their effectiveness.

After one year, the students who'd been tutored had improved their skills. But it's the effect on the tutors themselves that has been key.

All the tutors agree that the rigors of teaching improved their learning. And they saw teaching in a new light—as a demanding calling with special rewards.

"After just one year," says Smith principal Teresa Nicholson, "many of our students were already talking about a future in teaching and asking about career preparation. They were more focused on academics, better at managing their time, and far more confident."

Gonzalez, a sixth grade life sciences teacher, oversees the tutoring program—now an academic elective called Exploratory. He insists that the tutors hold their students to high academic standards. At the same time, he adds, "the lessons for both tutors and students go far beyond academics."

Gonzalez addresses topics ranging from effective discipline to pinpointing a student's learning difficulties. And he does his best to convey the intangibles of good teaching, like never giving up on a student.

But on these issues, admits Gonzalez, experience is the better teacher.

"Just recently," he says, "I had an eighth-grade tutor who was totally exasperated with her unmotivated fourth grader. She explained that nothing she tried seemed to work."

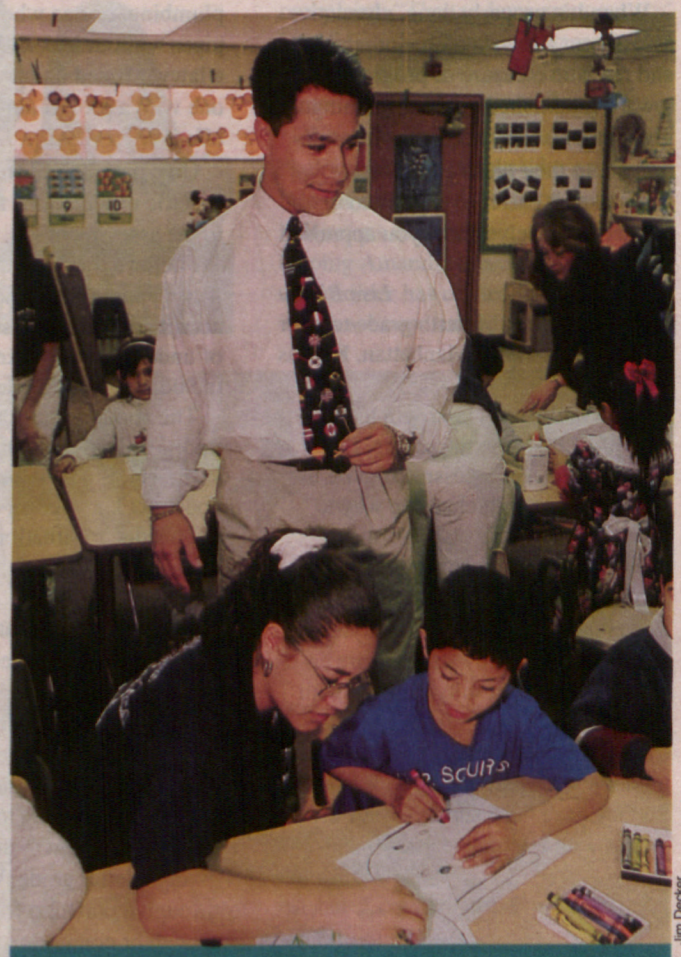
For More Information

Contact Ben Gonzalez at 702/799-7080.

Gonzalez reminded her of the power of incentives, then worked with her on an incentive plan, emphasizing the need to start small when setting goals.

About a month later, says Gonzalez, the tutor came rushing into his office, ecstatic. Her unmotivated student had just aced the tough spelling test she gave him.

"She was so proud of him," Gonzalez says. "But I think she was even prouder of herself—proud to be able to say, 'I am a teacher.'"



Jim Decker

Teacher Ben Gonzalez guides middle school tutors who proudly wear shirts saying, "Future Educators of America."

Idea Exchange

Mission Possible

Just telling students why abstaining from sex is a good idea is never as effective as letting them identify their own good reasons. Here's a fun way to have the students do just that.

Divide your class into groups. You'll then need:

1. *Mission Impossible* music
2. Balloons—one for each group of students (eight orange ones if you have eight groups) and a different color balloon for each question you will use (eight orange, eight green if you'll use two questions).
3. Strips of paper with "missions," like "Your mission is to . . .":
   - Name activities a person can do to show love and sexual feelings without risk of disease or pregnancy.
   - Give reasons why "just because you've had sex once doesn't mean you have to do it again."
   - Say how you could say "no"—and still keep the relationship—if you're getting pressure to have sex.
   - Name the goals that might be difficult to accomplish if you became a teenage parent.

Put one strip in each balloon (roll the strip around a pencil, insert the strip, then blow up the balloon). Put the same statement in the same color balloon, so each group will answer the same question.

Instruct the groups that when the music is played, one representative is to run up, grab a balloon, run back, pop the balloon, and answer the secret message that pops out.

Start the music, call out a color that corresponds to the statement you'd like them to discuss first—then stand back and watch the fun!

Tip: Don't start your "missions" with the old TV line "Your mission, should you decide to accept it . . ." Students will ask, "What if we decide not to accept it?"

Su Nottingham
Waterford, Michigan

Want More?

You can pass along your classroom tips to *NEA Today*'s 2.2 million readers in one of these four ways:

- By Mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
- By phone: 202 822-7201
- By Fax: 202 822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

Families &

Good Stuff

Building Character
In *What Do You Stand For? A Kid's Guide to Building Character*, teacher Barbara Lewis offers a practical, friendly, student-centered guide to developing values that will help young people make good decisions in life. Lewis, an NEA member, offers readers character dilemmas like "How might you help a person with a contagious disease and still protect yourself?" and "Should you always follow assignments exactly?" She also tells the stories of students who've faced dilemmas and come away stronger. $18.95 from Free Spirit. "What do you stand for?" posters available for $9.95. To order, call 800/735-7323 or visit the Web at www.freespirit.com.

Equal Access
The Web site for the non-profit Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www.nwrel.org) offers both parents and educators links to academic-oriented sites that will help provide every student with equal access to high-quality education.

The Word on Values
From Charles Dickens to Charles Johnson, bell hooks to Elie Wiesel—great authors show us *The Plain Truth of Things: The Role of Values in a Complex World.* Editors Colin Greer and Herbert Kohl provide brief commentary on the compiled writings of dozens of writers from around the world—essays, poems, plays, and book excerpts that illustrate the values of idealism, hopefulness, integrity, empathy, compassion, spirituality, and more. HarperCollins, 433 pp., $27.50.

More Than Good Grades
In *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*, Patricia McDonough examines the issues of access, equity, and the complex social factors that determine how families decide where a student should apply and ultimately attend college. The focus: a working-class public school, an upper-middle-class public school, a private prep school, and a Catholic school in Northern California. $16.95 from State University of New York Press. Call 800/666-2211 to order or visit the Web at www.sunypress.edu.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"Morale is low, parents withdraw students, and you can't wait until the school year ends."

Rogers Griffin, school counselor, Lafayette Parish, Louisiana

Dilemma

Suitable Alternatives

Ted Pitts

How do you get parents to buy in on alternative assessment?

Involve parents in the process—make them partners. When parents understand what's going on, they're more likely to accept. They become upset when they're left out.

For example, I have students write a story each quarter. At the end of the project, I have a place for parents to evaluate their child's work. This is beneficial both for them and the student.

When it's properly done, alternative assessment allows a more authentic and realistic measure of progress toward established goals of learning. It gives parents very necessary information about their child's learning—and makes it easier to explain to learners themselves how you appraised their work.

Lisa Bietau
Fourth grade teacher
Manhattan, Kansas

As a multi-age classroom teacher of fifth and sixth graders, I've found alternative assessment to be the fairest, most comprehensive way to assess learning. It's also the one testing method that considers individuals at their own developmental level as well as preferred learning style.

The parents of my students are encouraged by the results they see with their children—their depth of understanding of major issues, their desire to talk about what they have learned. So they have been supportive of my efforts with alternative assessment.

Phyllis Walder
Fifth/sixth grade teacher
Clinton, Maine

I use concrete examples when talking to parents. For instance, would they employ a plumber who has a perfect score on a multiple choice test on plumbing, or one who can install your pipes without leaks? Would they hire a lawyer based on bar exam scores, or one with a proven ability to build an effective case?

Give parents and students clear and specific expectations for scoring prior to the assessment.

I believe the main obstacle in getting parents and the community to accept authentic assessments is a lack of understanding of key issues, including the rationale for using it.

The ability to perform well on traditional assessment is not sufficient. Students must be able to construct knowledge, and to apply this knowledge to situations beyond the classroom.

Don Daws
High school mathematics teacher
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Parental "buy-in" is part of the educational process. I have chosen to use portfolios because they're a better way to show parents their child's growth than simply giving a letter grade. When looking through a portfolio for examples of growth or comparing their child's work with an exemplar, parents can see the basis for a particular score.

We can no longer hold students accountable to some elusive measure. Parents appreciate that we are attempting to fine-tune our reporting system. By clearly stating our goals and the steps needed in the process, we are taking the mystery out of assessment for everyone involved.

Teachers need to state up-front what the expectations are and how they can be achieved. That way students and parents can see what needs to be accomplished and how they can go about it. Standards are set and modeled (by exemplars or anchor papers), and any student, parent, or teacher can assess the level of achievement.

Whether it's part of the beginning-of-the-year packet, at conference time, or at reporting time, we should call it "better" assessment rather than "alternative" assessment.

Laura Grosvenor
Elementary teacher
Seattle, Washington

Got an Answer?

It's back-to-school night. How do you get reluctant parents to attend?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org**.

Respondents published here will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug.

Communities

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Parents stop you on the street to tell you once again all that you did for their child—three years earlier."

Kris Flewelling, fourth grade teacher, Sioux City, Iowa

Delight

Stock in Students Rises

Remedial math students wow local stockholders with the success of their school store.

The stock market crash of October 19, 1987, sent shock waves throughout the global economy. The after-shocks reached Wheeling, West Virginia—and changed the way Title I students at Madison Elementary learn math.

Students peppered Rosemary Anderson, a Title I teacher at Madison, with questions: How does the stock market work? Why do people lose money? Why does a business sell stock?

"I wasn't ready for the interest among students," says Anderson. "Our kids, after all, don't come from affluent backgrounds. It's really unlikely that many parents were directly affected by the hit to Wall Street."

Anderson saw this curiosity as a teaching opportunity. She invited a professional stockbroker to explain the basics of the market to her students. They perked up when he discussed the use of limited stock sales to create start-up funding.

When their guest left, the students asked, Why can't we start a business?

Anderson explained that they would first have to step back and learn all that it takes to run a business. Undaunted, her students dug in and learned about selling stock, creating stock certificates, ordering inventory, obtaining a business license, and preparing state income tax reports.

Then they turned to the members of the community, going door-to-door to sell stock shares for $1 apiece.

In short order, the young entrepreneurs raised $293. Taking their money and their newfound expertise, they opened the Madison General Store on campus.

Students run the register, help younger customers figure out if they have enough money, look out for shoplifters, and stock the shelves with basics like pencils and notebooks and a few luxury items like "glow balls."

"The store was originally designed to offer a better way to teach remedial math," explains Anderson. "But it's now the locus for a wide-ranging multidisciplinary program."

Ordering from catalogs demands reading skills. Completing tax forms becomes a lesson on government and the economy. As store employees, the students learn social skills. At the annual social event for stockholders, they learn the importance of good community relations.

The students who serve on the Board of Directors are elected. So they must campaign for office—writing a speech, then delivering it over the intercom.

Teacher Rosemary Anderson with Amanda Biehl.

Title I students are held in high esteem, since working in the store is now considered prestigious. Anderson and her colleague Deborah Archie are regularly approached by students asking how they can get into the Title I program.

Other schools in the area are looking into developing similar projects.

Fifth grader Amanda Biehl, chairperson of the store's board, has one complaint: "The tax laws are too hard." But she likes learning math, and says it's nice to be "a little bit famous."

What she enjoys most, though, is "helping the big people who come into the store."

It seems that the "big people" like helping Amanda, too. To date, no stockholder has cashed in shares, which are now valued at $8.

For More Information

Contact Rosemary Anderson at 304/243-0366.

John Heller

Title I students at Madison Elementary know that tallying the day's take from the store they created is just one of many tasks that makes a well-run business work.

Idea Exchange

High Marks for Motivation

As a resource room teacher, I needed a motivational tool for my students. So I've recruited 40 local restaurants and 65 other businesses to award students with food or discounts for excellent grades at the end of a marking period.

To set up your own enrichment program:

- Compose a letter in May or June on school letterhead explaining your enrichment program and asking businesses to contribute rewards for student achievers.

Explain that students who receive an *A* for five weeks in a row or an *A* for the marking period will receive a voucher on school letterhead that they can present to receive their prize. Promise good publicity for participating businesses.

- Visit stores and get them to sign up.
- As you get more stores involved, show the list to prospective participants to encourage them to join in.
- Make up the voucher for the program, and send one to business owners soon after they sign up. That way they know what to expect and will keep the program in mind.
- Send a thank-you to businesses that have signed up, along with a list of all the businesses in the program.
- Circulate this list to all the appropriate staff at your school, including the principal.

I've found improvement not only in academics, but in student behavior as well.

Barry Schwartz
Livingston, New Jersey

Want More?

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7201, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

'Safe Kids' in May
National Safe Kids Week, May 2-9, highlights safety awareness around the most dangerous places for children—in the home, at play, in the car. A free kids poster featuring Olympic athletes and safety tips is available from the National Safe Kids Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004, 202/662-0600, Fax 202/393-2072. On the Web at www.safekids.org.

Sad Lesson
Brandon Tells His Story is a compelling video account of a 17-year-old who made two bad choices: drinking and driving. He's now permanently disabled. The Century Council is making 5,000 copies of the video and an educator's activity guide available free of charge to NEA members. To order, call 800/431-4499.

Drugs and Violence
Drugs are often related to youth violence. *Safe Schools/Safe Students: A Guide to Violence Prevention Strategies* assesses classroom prevention programs, examines school policies, reviews environmental changes that protect students, and provides practical advice. $12.95 ($9.95 for five or more copies) from Drug Strategies, 2445 M St., N.W., Suite 480, Washington, DC 20037.

Members Battle Cancer
Working with NEA state and local affiliates, NEA members across the country are promoting breast and cervical cancer early detection. A free summary of their campaign is available from the NEA Health Information Network while supplies last. Call 800/718-8387.

Reduce Risk of Hepatitis
A new Hepatitis Education Packet from the NEA Health Information Network includes general strategies to reduce exposure to bloodborne pathogens in the workplace and special tips for school employees. To order a free copy, call 800/718-8387.

Uncover the Hidden Epidemic

Dr. Thomas Eng, study director for the Science Panel on Interactive Communication and Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is co-editor of The Hidden Epidemic: Confronting Sexually Transmitted Diseases *from the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine. He spoke with NEA Health Information Network staffer Julia Mitchell on the risks today's adolescents face.*

What sexually transmitted diseases are most common among adolescents?
Chlamydia is extremely prevalent. In some studies among young sexually active adolescents, approximately 30 to 40 percent have it. Chlamydia often has no symptoms but can, if untreated, lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can cause infertility or ectopic pregnancy and other complications.

Human papilloma virus, which can cause cervical cancer, is also extremely prevalent among young people.

Other diseases include gonorrhea, herpes, and HIV infection. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) also increase the risk of transmitting or acquiring HIV infection.

How many teens have a sexually transmitted disease?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates there are about 12 million STD cases per year—and some 3 million occur among teenagers.

Why are the numbers so high?
Biologically, in female adolescents, certain types of cells making up the cervix are exposed to the vaginal cavity and are more prone to infection than they are in older women.

Then there are social factors. Adolescents are more likely to have multiple sex partners and unprotected intercourse than adults. Some may abuse drugs or alcohol, which increases their risk. And young people as a group are the least likely to have health insurance and medical care.

There's the issue of power imbalance—young women may find it difficult to negotiate the use of protective behaviors such as condoms in relationships with older men, for example.

And sexual abuse occurs more often in younger people and can result in the transmission of these diseases.

What's the latest news on treatment?
Now we can simply do a urine test to test for infection, instead of having to take a swab. This is less expensive, more convenient, and non-invasive.

Single-dose therapy for some bacterial sexually transmitted diseases is now increasingly available. That's extremely helpful, especially for people who have trouble getting to a health provider or don't take their medications as they should.

What background facts should educators know?
Those who support STD prevention education often face controversy for that position. They should know that the research shows that programs dealing with sexuality education—and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV prevention—do not increase sexual activity.

In addition, one 1995 survey asked teenagers about their primary source of information about sexually transmitted diseases. Only about 11 percent reported that the primary source of information was family members.

Fifty-two percent stated that the school system served as their source. Twenty-five percent said books, magazines, and television. And the last category was health care providers, which was only at 5 percent.

What facts should educators be relaying to young people?
The number one message is that young people should delay the onset of sexual intercourse. Young people who start early are at increased risk for sexually transmitted diseases.

The second message is that adolescents who do choose to have intercourse should always use protection.

Next, note that many sexually transmitted diseases can be extremely harmful to a person's future. If any young people suspect they have one of these diseases, then we should help them seek medical care as soon as possible.

Educators can be more proactive in teaching about comprehensive sexual health—including STDs. And they can integrate information about sexual health into courses.

But the school system is not the solution for all social problems. So educators should work with parents, the administration, the school board, and community groups like the local health department, local health plans, churches, and other groups in forming a partnership to address this issue.

Resources

■ The Institute of Medicine's *The Hidden Epidemic: Confronting Sexually Transmitted Diseases* examines the scope of sexually transmitted diseases in the United States and provides a critical assessment of the nation's response. $39.95 from the National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave., N.W., Lockbox 285, Washington, DC 20055, 800/624-6242. For summaries and online ordering, visit the Web at www2.nas.edu/stdforum.

■ April is STD Awareness Month. The American Social Health Association Resource Center is providing a free packet on how to promote awareness and education on sexually transmitted diseases. Call 919/361-8416 to order. For a catalog of other materials on sexually transmitted diseases, call 800/230-6039.

■ For more information on sexually transmitted diseases, call the National STD Hotline at 800/227-8922.

Rights Watch

When Teachers Harass Students

We know who gets hurt. But soon the Supreme Court will rule on when a school can be held liable under Title IX.

Alida Gebser was only 13 when she first met Frank Waldrop in 1991. She was a student in his wife's eighth grade class and a participant in the gifted and talented program at the Lago Vista Independent School District in Texas.

Alida soon joined a high school "great books" discussion group led by Waldrop. The following year, she wound up in his freshman social studies class.

During this time, according to the lawsuit that she has since filed, Waldrop began showing Alida special attention. He flirted with her. He flattered her. He went out of his way to spend time alone with her.

Just before spring break of Alida's freshman year, Waldrop visited her home, ostensibly to deliver a book she needed for a school project. There, Waldrop kissed the 14-year-old and fondled her breasts and genitals.

Later that spring, Waldrop repeatedly had sexual intercourse with the student.

That summer, Waldrop taught an advanced placement class, and Alida was his only student. He would pick her up at her house, and they regularly engaged in sexual intercourse during class time.

In the fall, Alida wound up in Waldrop's class again, and the relationship continued—until a police officer caught them having intercourse. At the time, Alida was 15 years old.

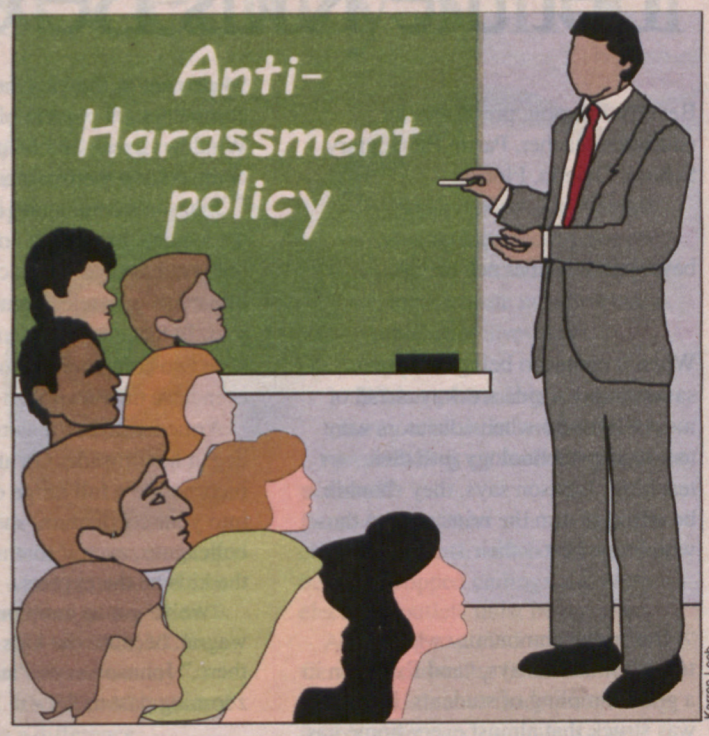
Did the school know about Waldrop's relationship with Alida?

No. But other female students had previously complained to the principal about Waldrop's inappropriate classroom comments. The principal met with Waldrop to discuss the complaints but didn't investigate further. Nor did she alert the school's Title IX coordinator.

In addition, the school allegedly failed to disseminate to students an anti-harassment policy and complaint procedure as required by Title IX. As a result, Alida testified, she "didn't know what to do" when Waldrop initiated sexual advances.

"If I had known at the beginning what I was supposed to do when a teacher starts making sexual advances toward me, I probably would have reported it," she added.

So what did Alida and her mother do? They hired a lawyer and sued the school district for money damages.



Karren Loeb

The complaint alleges that the school district is liable for Waldrop's sexual harassment of Alida under Title IX, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination by educational institutions receiving federal money.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled last year that the school district couldn't be held liable because it didn't know Waldrop was sexually harassing Alida.

According to the court, a school district cannot be held liable for a teacher's sexual harassment of a student unless "a school district employee with supervisory power over the offending employee actually knew of the abuse, had power to end the abuse, and failed to do so."

Under this legal standard, a student's complaint to another teacher is not sufficient to impose liability on the school. A harassed student must tell a "supervisory employee," such as a principal or superintendent.

The burden that this standard places on student victims is demonstrated by another Texas case, *Leija* v. *Canutillo Independent School District*.

In this case, a second grader was sexually molested by her health teacher. He placed her on his lap and fondled her during weekly in-class movies. The girl and her mother complained to the homeroom teacher. But the court ruled that this wasn't enough to impose liability on the school.

How can we protect students from sexual harassment—and schools from being sued?

With education, according to NEA's brief in Alida Gebser's case, *Gebser* v. *Lago Vista Independent School District*.

In December, the Supreme Court agreed to review the lower court's decision in *Gebser*. The Court's ruling will ultimately determine when a school can be held liable for a teacher's sexual harassment of a student under Title IX.

The Clinton administration and NEA both filed friend-of-the-court briefs in support of Alida.

In its brief, NEA argues that, at a minimum, a school should be held liable if it knew or should have known of the harassment and failed to take appropriate steps to stop it.

In addition, NEA argues that a school should be held liable if a teacher uses his or her position of authority to sexually harass a student—with one exception.

NEA maintains that schools that adopt effective, pro-active anti-harassment policies, complaint procedures, and prevention programs should not be held liable.

In the *Gebser* case, NEA argues that because Waldrop used his authority and position as a teacher to seduce a student, the school should be held liable—unless it can show that it had in place a comprehensive sexual harassment policy, procedure, and prevention program, and that students were informed about them.

The Court will hear oral arguments in *Gebser* on March 25. A final decision is expected this summer.

—Cynthia M. Chmielewski
NEA Office of General Counsel

Harassment Cases Top High Court Docket

In addition to the *Gebser* case, the Supreme Court has agreed to tackle three other sexual harassment cases this term.

This is remarkable considering that the Court has weighed in on the topic only three times previously. The Court's action signals that it intends to offer much-needed guidance on this volatile legal issue.

The key cases before the Court include:

- *Oncale* v. *Sundowner Offshore Services*. In this case, a male employee sued his employer after he suffered sexual assaults and rape threats by several male coworkers.

The Court will decide whether sexual harassment of one employee by another of the same sex is illegal under Title VII the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits sex discrimination in the workplace.

- *Faragher* v. *City of Boca Raton*. Here, a female lifeguard sued the city after several male supervisors made obscene comments and offensively touched her. She never complained to management about the conduct.

The Court will clarify under what circumstances an employer can be held liable under Title VII when a supervisor creates a "sexually hostile environment."

- *Burlington Industries* v. *Ellerth*. In this case, a female employee sued her employer after a supervisor suggested that she wouldn't succeed in her career unless she submitted to his sexual advances. She didn't submit, and wasn't fired or otherwise disciplined.

The legal issue is whether the employee can sue for damages under Title VII, even though she suffered no adverse employment action and didn't submit to the advances.

In addition, the Court has shown some interest in *Davis* v. *Monroe County Board of Education*. This case involves the highly controversial issue of whether a school district can be held liable for student-on-student sexual harassment under Title IX. The Court hasn't decided whether to take the case, but it has asked the Clinton administration to file a brief explaining its position.

—C.M.C.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

I recently got a computer with Windows 95 for my fifth grade classroom. Can you recommend a grade book program?

There are a number of grade book and classroom management software programs on the market. Here's a sample:

- *PGGP*, developed especially for elementary school educators by sixth grade teacher George Beckman, is available for Mac and Windows users. You can see more at www.pggp.com.
- ORBIS Software distributes a package called *Easy Grade Pro.* Contact ORBIS Software, P.O. Box 73745, Puyallup, WA 98373, or call Gracie Pauly at 206/848-6899.
- Contec Systems' *1stClass GradeBook* bills itself as easy to use and offers a wide variety of reports and graphs. Download a free trial copy at contec-systems.com.
- Excelsior Software makes a classroom management package that includes grading, seating charts, and lesson plans. Go to teachnet.k12.ca.us/software.htm for more information.
- The education category in the Shareware Shop's catalog contains complete shareware listings of classroom management software, along with screen dumps, reviews, and download information. Point your browser to www.bsoftware.com/seducate.htm.

Can you help me formulate a survey for parents and teachers about implementing a technology program?

The Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) has an excellent survey tool on its Web site, at www.mccsc.edu/survey.html, which asks stakeholders about their skills and interests. The survey also offers a needs assessment.

MCCSC allows educational institutions to copy its survey and adapt it for local use.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet on the Web for more Q&As.

Friendly User

'Let the Kids Be Our Teachers'

Who:
Beverly Johnson, pre-K special education teacher, Partin Elementary School, Oviedo, Florida

E-mail:
beverjo@magicnet.net

What:
When it comes to being computer savvy, today's kids are way ahead of most adults. So when educators want to integrate technology into their teaching, Johnson says, they shouldn't be afraid to turn the reins over to those who know best—their students.

Inspiration:
"I live in the community where I teach," Johnson says, "and I've been in a good sampling of students' homes. I was struck that almost every home has a computer.

"Meanwhile, teachers in my school were getting frustrated," she continues. "We have only four Internet connections for 750 kids, and our computers are old and don't even have enough memory to run a good word processing program."

Knowing that her colleagues didn't have to be constrained by this limited technology, Johnson developed a survey to measure just how plugged in students are at home. She surveyed every fourth and fifth grader at Partin.

"We were astonished at the numbers," says Johnson. "We found that 94 percent of the kids had home computers, 99 percent of those were Windows users, and 68 percent were connected to the Internet."

Johnson's community is way above the national average in home technology, thanks to a high concentration of parents who telecommute in sales jobs. In fact, many students said they have two computers at home, and some even have their own Web pages.

Armed with her results, Johnson began her crusade: Go ahead and incorporate a full range of technology into your curriculum, she tells her colleagues, even if that means letting the kids be the experts.

"We've got to jump on this bandwagon, because the kids are already there," Johnson says, "and they're zooming past us."

Lesson:
During lunchtime, Johnson helps the fifth grade gifted teacher develop and work with "cooperative technology groups," which mix together students with and without resources at home.

For a typical research project, a student with Internet access at home surfs for and prints out relevant information, a student with a CD-ROM encyclopedia looks up topics, and another student handles word processing duties.

The group member without a home computer culls through the collected research and contributes original artwork.

"They're learning how to use research tools," Johnson explains. "For instance, the other day, I had done an Internet search for the children on Alta Vista, and one boy said, 'Let me try it on Yahoo.' Another knew that NASA has a good Web site on our topic. They're already recognizing sites that are good educational resources."

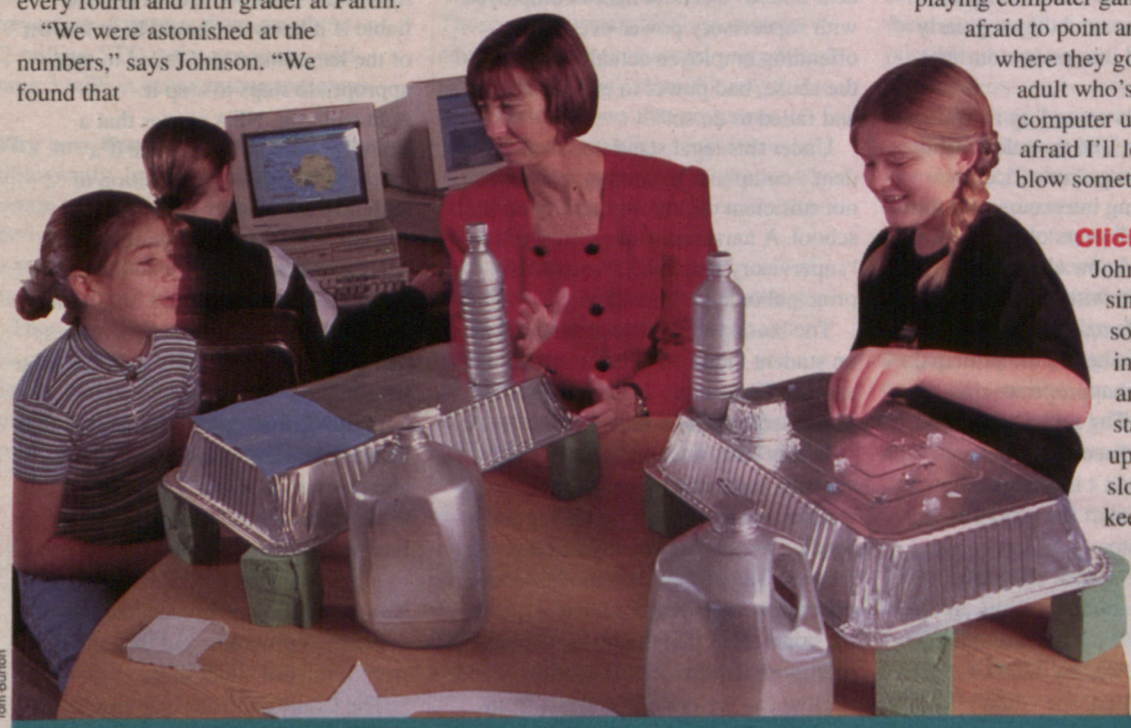
Besides helping educators push the bounds of what can be accomplished at school, Johnson says, technically savvy students can help when schools add new computers and software—but don't give staff the training or time to master them.

"My biggest stumbling block is that teachers are afraid to let the kids be the teachers," she says. "But the kids are naturals at it. They were born playing computer games. They're not afraid to point and click and see where they go—whereas an adult who's a first-time computer user will say, 'I'm afraid I'll lose it, ruin it, or blow something up!'"

Click:
Johnson's message is sinking in. "I do some after-school in-service training, and people are starting to show up," she says. "It's slow coming, but I keep reminding them, don't be afraid of the great resource we have—the students."

For More Information

- *Market Data Retrieval studies schools' access to and integration of technology. For recent research results, go to www.schooldata.com.*
- *Check out Partin Elementary School's Web site at web.scps.k12.fl.us/site/partin/.*



Tom Burton

Antarctica bound? Florida teacher Beverly Johnson helps fifth graders use the research they gathered on the Internet to build a model village that could withstand the rigors of the frozen continent.

Click Here

Building the 21st Century School

Desks and chalkboards have been the hallmarks of the learning environment for the past 100 years—but now computers are becoming just as ubiquitous and, increasingly, just as necessary. Are schools ready for them?

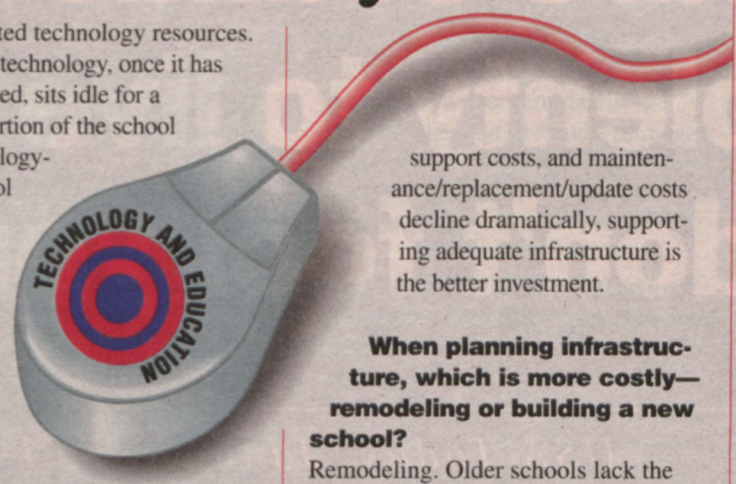
NEA's Center for Education Technology asked Dr. Ray Steele, director of Ball State University's Center for Information and Communication Sciences, how to best equip schools for the 21st century.

What does a "technology-friendly" school look like?
The technology-friendly school blueprint addresses infrastructure: wire, fiber, or satellite technology that delivers analog and digital signals—voice, data, and video—to every building and classroom.

Isolated computers and islands of unconnected, difficult-to-access information are costly and ineffective in other information-dependent organizations. Why should it be different in education—perhaps the most information-dependent environment of all?

So should schools be wiring every classroom computer and desk? Isn't that expensive?
The point isn't to run wire to every desk—that's just not practical. I'm talking about maximizing access to a school's limited technology resources.

Much new technology, once it has been introduced, sits idle for a significant portion of the school day. A technology-friendly school is one that is appropriately wired and also makes use of wireless technologies.



This combination allows a teacher to select and use central resources via a wired system, and then release them for others to use. There is no one technology—not PCs, VCRs, or videodiscs—that will serve every education need. It's the combination of tools that makes a difference.

Is it better to beef up a school's communications infrastructure, or try to lower the student-to-computer ratio?
Infrastructure is usually funded from part of a district's budget that is labeled "infrastructure renewal"—not from the same pot schools use to purchase hardware and software.

The federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 freed even more money to support infrastructure.

Nonetheless, unless purchase costs, support costs, and maintenance/replacement/update costs decline dramatically, supporting adequate infrastructure is the better investment.

When planning infrastructure, which is more costly—remodeling or building a new school?
Remodeling. Older schools lack the conduits through which wiring must be run. Dropped ceilings and extra electrical outlets must be installed.

According to a 1995 study by the U.S. General Accounting Office, almost half of our schools have inadequate wiring for computers and communications.

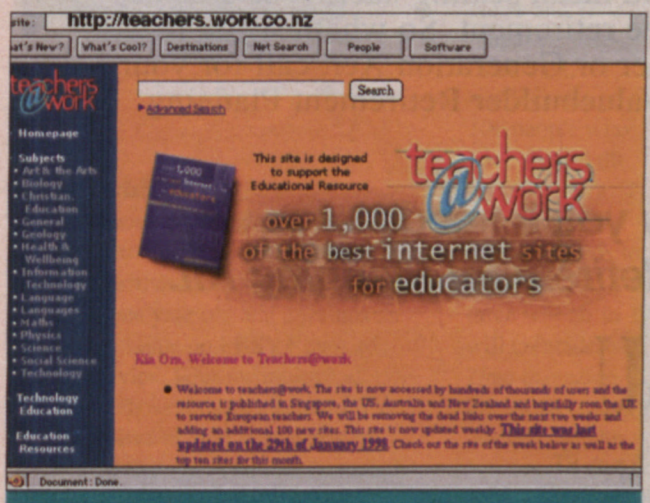
This means that the technology that's becoming essential to today's students will be out of reach for millions of them unless schools are reworked.

E-Rate Update

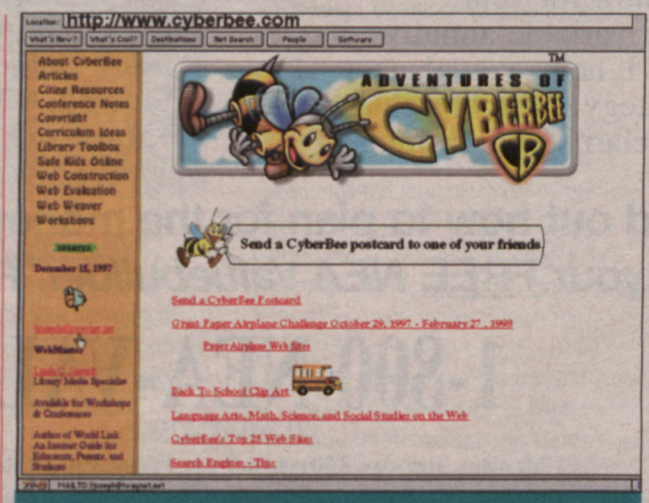
As of February, more than 14,000 public schools and libraries had applied for the E-rate, a discount for telecommunications services. Was your school one of them?

It's not too late! Go to www.slcfund.org to apply online.

Screen Shots



teachers.work.co.nz
Teachers at Work reviews and rates more than 1,500 K-12 education sites. Sites are sorted by curriculum area. Check out the monthly Top Ten List and the Site of the Week.



www.cyberbee.com
Let Cyberbee help you discover curriculum treasures. You'll find information on how to cite electronic references, evaluate Web pages, keep kids safe on the Internet, and much more.

New & Noteworthy

Keeping Kids Safe Online
EDVIEW is an innovative technology that makes all Web browsers child-safe. *EDVIEW* allows children to browse the Internet in only two modes: The Smart Zone, which restricts access to a library of sites that have been reviewed by educational professionals, and Channel Lock, which allows kids to access only approved sites.

Test drive the software at www.edview.com or call 888/949-9905. Licensing is $100 per school building per year, regardless of the number of computers.

Investment Basics
The Basics of Investing: A Guide for Educators is an educational site designed for teachers and students. The six-unit curriculum includes how to create a personal finance plan and how to choose from savings and investment options. Check it out at www.investor.nasd.com/ni_module_menu.html.

Weekly Web Reviews
Learning on the Web, at home.att.net/~nwalthall/, has weekly reviews of at least five educational sites. Reviews evaluate a site's features and age-appropriateness.

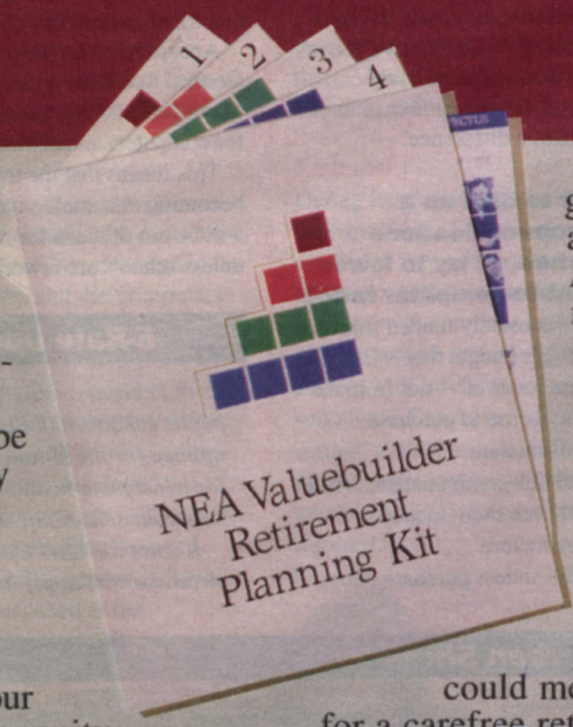
Teaching with the Net
Educating with the Internet by Nancy Skomars contains lots of information that educators need to know. The book offers guidelines for integrating Web sites into your curriculum, as well as tips on evaluating sites. It comes with a CD-ROM containing *Internet Watchdog* software and HTML templates. $29.95. Order your copy online at www. charlesriver.com or by calling 888/382-8505.

It's a Small World
E-Conflict at www.emulateme.com tries to eradicate conflict by building cultural awareness. This 1,500-page site offers a wealth of information about the world's nations—including maps, flags, national anthems, and monthly quizzes.

Geography CD-ROM
National Geographic has published *Geobee Challenge*, a CD-ROM that helps students learn about geography through a quiz show format. Individual copies are $49.95, and a five-user pack sells for $159.95. Call 415/897-9900 to order.

"A million bucks in retirement savings sure sounds like plenty to live on, but don't fool yourself."

USA Today, January 7, 1998



Will your dream retirement become a rude awakening?
Experts report that many Americans will not be able to maintain their standard of living once they retire. At worst, they may not be able to retire at all. The reason: they didn't plan ahead. If this comes as a shock, it's time to call about the NEA Valuebuilder Annuity.

Take a giant step toward a more secure retirement. Call now for your FREE NEA Valuebuilder variable annuity Retirement Planning Kit. It helps you plan the right investment strategy for your age and lifestyle . . . tells how to clarify your retirement goals. . . details the six new funds available . . . and much more. And licensed, highly experienced representatives are available at no charge to answer your questions and help you take the next steps.

Whenever you plan to retire, don't wait another moment. Even if your savings and pension are supplemented by Social Security and/or STRS, putting off retirement planning could mean scaling back your dreams for a carefree retirement. So whether you're a Baby Boomer or Generation Xer, call for your Free NEA Valuebuilder Retirement Planning Kit today.

Find out how to plan for the money you'll need.
Call today for your FREE *NEA Valuebuilder® Retirement Planning Kit.*

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The Internal Revenue Code prohibits certain distributions attributable to salary reduction contributions before an individual reaches 59½, separates from service, dies or becomes disabled, or experiences a financial hardship as defined by the Code.

VBNT0498

Heads Up!

TV Tips

From the Earth to the Moon

HBO, Sundays, April 5-May 10, 8-10 p.m. ET. Produced by Tom Hanks, this 13-hour miniseries recreates scenes from NASA's space program from 1962-1971 and traces the voyages of America's Apollo astronauts. For more information on the Web, go to www.hbo.com.

Erik Melnila

Real Kids, Real Adventures

Discovery Channel, premiering Sunday, April 5, 10:30-11 a.m. ET. Based on the book series of the same name, this new show tells the true stories of kids who have performed remarkable acts of bravery and ingenuity.

Discovery

Teletubbies

PBS, premiering Monday, April 6, check local listings for time. This popular British series, designed for children one year old and up, finds an American home on PBS's Ready to Learn Service. Four technological babies—whose tummies become TV screens—live in their own world of childhood fantasy. A national outreach campaign is planned. Contact your local PBS station for details.

The Day Lincoln Was Shot

TNT, Sunday, April 12, 8-10 p.m. ET. Told from the perspective of both Abraham Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth, this film chronicles the five hours leading up to the assassination at Ford's Theater, in Washington, D.C. For a classroom guide, check out www.tnt.turner.com/tuoriginals.

Andrew Eccles

Life by the Numbers

PBS, Beginning Wednesday, April 8, 8-9 p.m. ET and continuing the following six Sundays, April 12-May 17, 6-7 p.m. ET. Hosted by Danny Glover, this seven-part series reveals the vital role mathematics plays in sports, work, education, and life. For a free teacher's guide (grades 6 and up) and poster, call 800/TI-CARES, or visit www.ti.com/calc/mathlife.

People of the Century: The *Time* 100

Premiering in April, check local listings for date and time. CBS News and *Time* magazine celebrate the lives and legacies of 100 people who have shaped the last 100 years. The first of six shows airs this month, followed by two more this year. The remaining three will air in 1999. Each program will coincide with a special issue of *Time* magazine. Call Time Education Programs at 800/882-0852 about teacher's guides.

Scientific American Frontiers: The New Zoos

PBS, Wednesday, April 15, 8-9 p.m. ET. Host Alan Alda visits San Diego, Washington, D.C., and Boston to discover how zoos and aquariums are improving the lives of their captive inhabitants and helping to restore wild populations. For a free classroom guide for kids in grades 5 and up, call 800/315-5010.

The Echo of Thunder

CBS, Sunday, April 19, 9-11 p.m. ET. The lives of a poor farm family are changed when the husband's estranged 15-year-old daughter from a previous marriage comes to live with them after her mother dies.

Wonderful World of Disney: My Date with the President's Daughter

ABC, Sunday, April 19, 7-9 p.m. ET. For 16-year-old Hallie, daughter of the President, life in the White House is a dull routine until Duncan, an insecure teenage boy, comes along and asks her for a date.

Merlin

Sam Neill

NBC, Sunday-Monday, April 26-27, 9-11 p.m. ET. The Arthurian legend of Camelot and its mystical sorcerer comes alive in this classic tale of good and evil. A free poster and study guide have been developed for high school English teachers. Call your local NBC affiliate for a copy.

The Inventor's Specials: Marie Curie

HBO, premiering in April, check local listings. Set in Paris during World War I, two young girls mistake scientist Marie Curie for a spy and find themselves on the front lines. There they learn how science can save lives.

The Tiger Woods Story

Showtime, premiering in April, check local listings. This dramatic film chronicles the meteoric rise of golfing phenomenon Tiger Woods and goes behind the scenes to look at Woods's personal life, including his struggle with racism and cultural identity.

Note: *Storytime Connections: A Literacy Guide* is now available from the International Reading Association for $14.95 plus $3 s&h. Call 800/336-7323, ext. 266.

These listings are brought to you by KIDSNET, a national computerized clearinghouse for electronic media. For additional information, check two Web sites: ***www.kidsnet.org*** *and* ***www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp****.*

school stories

Want to know what's really happening inside America's schools? *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, tackles the tough issues on and off campus and offers lessons of hope. Here's the schedule:

Better Business, Stronger Schools
Sunday, April 12, 9 a.m. ET. What happens when business works hand-in-hand with schools? In Wendell, North Carolina, the Siemens Corporation steps in to help build a state-of-the-art training center and launch the careers of local kids.

Putting Kids First
Sunday, April 19, 9 a.m. ET. At Teachers Memorial Elementary School in Kinston, North Carolina, the staff and principal will do anything for the kids and community—and it shows. Find out how they're working magic for their students.

High Stakes Testing
Sunday, April 26, 9 a.m. ET. Two years ago, ony 21 percent of Milwaukee's students passed a math exam required for graduation. Recently, 90 percent of seniors passed the same exam. Here's the story of a community that rallied to help its students.

If Teachers Fail: Fix or Fire?
Sunday, May 3, 9 a.m. ET. Take a look at the Columbus (Ohio) Peer Assistance and Review Program, which puts veteran teachers in charge of helping first-year teachers and peers in trouble.

Single-Sex Classes
Sunday, May 10, 9 a.m. ET. Single-sex classes have stirred up controversy for years. This episode follows a group of Virginia teachers who are sending students to single-sex and mixed classes to figure out which works best.

BONUS: An added plus for NEA members, each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing with an additional 15 to 20 minutes of tips from the educators featured in the show. For details or to order, call 800/229-4200.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Shopping for a Gift?

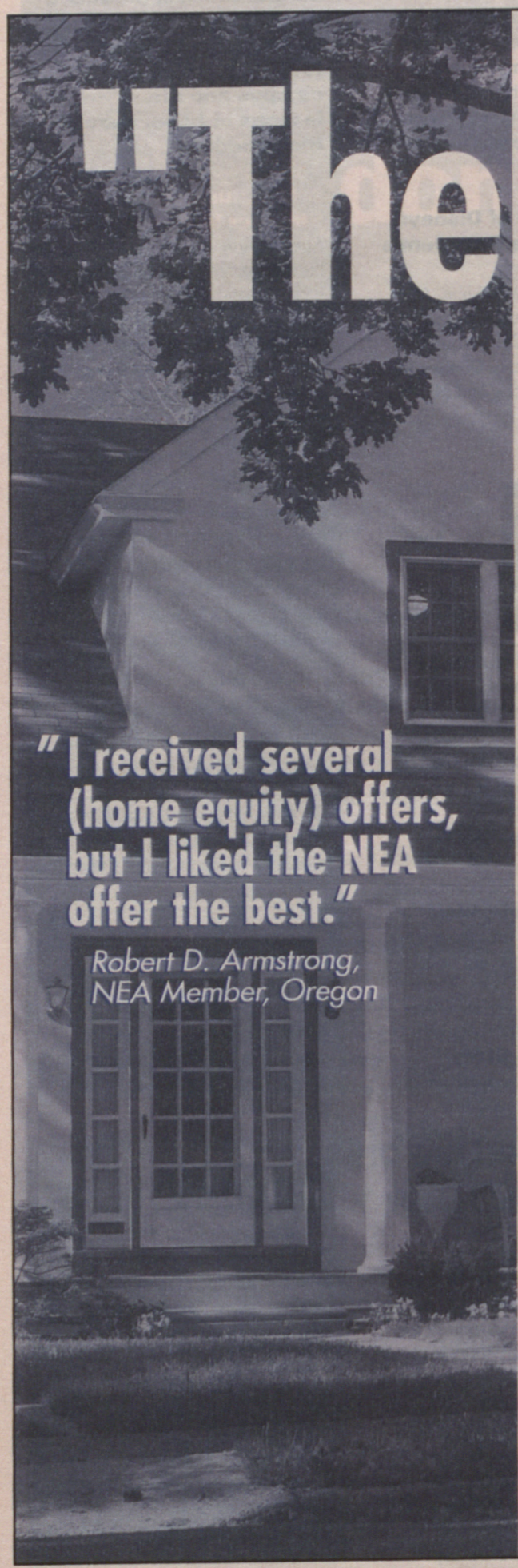
If you need a gift for a colleague or are looking for beginning teacher resources, check out the 1998 NEA

Professional Library Catalog, your gateway to more than 200 books and videos that can help you take charge of your professional growth. Free. NEA Professional Library, 800/229-4200. Call for details on the biggest inventory reduction sale ever.

Sticker Planet

Your favorite sticker is just a phone

call away. Sticker Planet is a 68-page catalog with more than 350 sticker designs. A portion of Sticker Planet's profits are donated to a variety of charitable organizations. $5 includes s&h. Call 800/557-8678. On the Web: www.stickerplanet.com.



As an NEA member, you can get a home equity loan right over the phone.

A home equity loan or line of credit* could be the smartest way to consolidate bills, finance home improvements, put the kids through college or buy that new car or truck. That's because, unlike most other loans, home equity loans have low interest rates and are usually tax deductible.** The smartest place to come for your home equity loan or line of credit is the NEA Home Financing Program (provided by Norwest Direct). Applying is free and NEA Members get preferred interest rates. Plus, you may be able to borrow up to 100% of your home's equity.† Get a profitable lesson in savings and convenience by calling today. You'll like what you learn.

1-800-667-5849

Mon. - Thurs.. 8am - 10pm. Friday 8am to 8pm, and Saturday 9am to 3pm (ET).

NEA Home Financing Program®

...helping to make dreams affordable

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NORWEST

Home equity loans not offered by Norwest Direct in Texas. The NEA is not offering or originating any loans in connection with this program and does not approve or deny loans. This program is administered by Norwest Direct which processes, originates and services home equity loans.

***Variable rate APR is based on the Prime Rate published in *The Wall Street Journal*, which was 8.50% as of Jan. 29, 1998, plus a range of -1.0 to 6.05% based on Norwest Direct's underwriting criteria. Maximum APR is 18%. Property insurance is required.**

**See your tax advisor regarding the deductibility of interest. Offer subject to change without notice.

†Some restrictions apply.

Norwest and its design are registered service marks of Norwest Corporation. Norwest Direct is a division of Norwest Bank Colorado, N.A., an equal housing lender and Member FDIC. The NEA Home Financing Program is a registered mark of the National Education Association.

HFNT0498

Include Us!

Include Us!, a book for kids ages 2-11, explores the daily lives of children with disabilities and promotes acceptance, understanding, inclusion, self-esteem, and fun. $17.95 plus $1.50 s&h. Video also available for $14.95 plus $4.95 s&h. Call 888/INCLUDE.

Free Poster

"It's Cool To Be Yourself," a free poster from the National Down Syndrome Society, can help teachers of students in grades 7-9 foster friendships and understanding among students with and without disabilities. Call 800/221-4602. E-mail: info@ndss.org. On the Web: www.ndss.org.

Native Peoples

Native Peoples magazine, a quarterly that portrays Native American arts and lifestyles, has published a special edition ($4.75 plus $3 s&h) on its 10th anniversary. The magazine aims to give students of all ages a better understanding of Native Americans. Subscriptions: $13.95. For a study guide, go to www.nativepeoples.com or call 888/262-8483.

501 Tips for Teachers

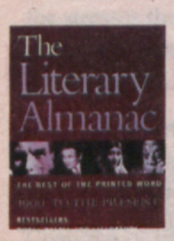
Need fresh ideas to inspire your students? Check out *501 Tips for Teachers* by Robert Ramsey. A collection of school-tested teaching techniques, the book also contains classroom management strategies and everyday encouragement for successful teachers at all levels. $12 plus $5 s&h. Call 800/323-4900. Send E-mail to ntcpub@aol.com. On the Web, go to ntc-school.com.

Dear Dr. King

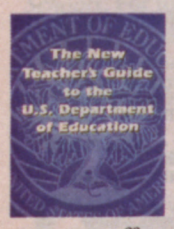
The dream of Dr. Martin Luther King,

Heads Up

Jr. lives on through *Dear Dr. King*, a collection of letters from today's children to the slain civil rights leader. A portion of the proceeds from book sales pays for student field trips to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. $14.95 plus $3.50 s&h. Call 800/759-0190.



Best of the Printed Word
Got questions about 20th century North American literature, literary prizes, all-time bestsellers, banned books, book authors, or book critics? Chances are the answer can be found in *The Literary Almanac: The Best of the Printed Word*. $16.95 plus $2 s&h. Call Andrews McMeel Publishing, 800/642-6480. On the Web: www.uexpress.com.



Details on the Department
The New Teacher's Guide to the U.S. Department of Education includes a listing of programs and resources offered by the Department, a description of the Clinton administration's priorities for education, a guide to federal Internet resources for teachers, and, for the first time, an index. Free. Call 800 USA-Learn.

Down to Earth
Hush! Here are some secrets for kids. In Michael Rosen's *Down To Earth*, 41 children's book authors and illustrators divulge their gardening secrets, stories, and ideas for kids projects. Proceeds benefit community gardening programs funded by Share Our Strength, an anti-hunger, anti-poverty organization. $18 plus $4 s&h. Call 800/543-1918. On the Web: www.strength.org.

Think Big!
Cynthia L. Johnson's big books for K-3 children encourage them to "Think Big!" and to boost their skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and enjoying school. $19.95 plus $3.50 s&h. Call 800/523-2371. On the Web: www.wrightgroup.com.

Kids in History
A new video celebrates American kids who made history from 1607 to 1997. Produced by Nickelodeon, the video can help you celebrate this year's Big Help Week, April 18 to 25. A two-page teaching guide is also available. Call 212/846-4333. On the Web: www.nick.com.

Irish Famine Curriculum
This curriculum for use in teaching secondary school history or social studies ($20) includes a 40-minute classroom version of *When Ireland Starved* ($20), which aired on PBS. For book and video together, $35 includes s&h. For information, call 609/727-4255. Send order requests on school or library letterhead to Irish Famine Curriculum Committee, 757 Paddock Path, Moorestown, NJ 08057.

REPORT CARD

Social Skills: WORKS WELL WITH OTHERS

Evaluation:

Saturn was recently evaluated by a number of educators.
And it looks like we got a pretty good response.

Not too long ago, a group of educators came to the Saturn plant, armed with plenty of paper and pencils, to find out how our union works with our management. And since it doesn't really qualify as a trade secret, we told them: We work as though we're on the same team—because we are. So when we make decisions, we make them together, and when we need to solve a problem, we do that together too. Now, some of these people were in the process of developing similar partnerships, in their own districts, and we wanted to help in any way we could. So we formed a partnership with the NEA, and we started an awards program, to recognize school districts that use teamwork to improve the quality of their schools. So when a school board works together with teachers, toward a common goal, we give the district an award—because we think what they're trying to do is important. (Besides, after years of giving out stars and happy faces, they deserve some encouragement too.)

SATURN UAW

For more information about the Saturn/UAW partnership award, or to nominate your school district, please call us at 1-800-738-1817. For more information about Saturn, visit our Web site at www.saturn.com. ©1998 Saturn Corporation.

A DIFFERENT KIND *of* COMPANY. A DIFFERENT KIND *of* CAR.

Heads Up

Grants

NFIE Grants

A Change of Course, the NEA National Foundation for the Improvement of Education's professional development grant program, is offering technical assistance and up to eight $2,000 planning grants to organizations representing or serving public school teachers. Deadline: May 29.

Applicants must read NFIE's report, *Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning*, before preparing letters of intent. You can call up the report on the Web at www.nfie.org. To buy a copy for $15 plus s&h, call NFIE Publications at 301/617-7830.

"Finding the right financial programs requires a lot of

homework,

But who has the time?"

"I don't want to wait for someone to return my calls. Will someone be there when I have

questions

about my finances?"

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At NEA Member Benefits, we constantly research the best financial programs available nationwide to make your hard-earned money go further. Our representatives will help you decide which programs best meet your needs—and to answer any questions you might have.

So whether you are looking for investment choices, help with retirement planning or the right credit card, talk to us first. We have already done the homework.

Call now to find out more. We are here Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (and Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.) ET.

Call us at NEA Member Benefits

1-800-637-4636

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Where to turn for answers.

MBNT0498

More than Pennies

Throughout the year, the J. C. Penney Community Education Grants Program awards some $500,000 to innovative schools and school districts in 10 selected markets. The company is especially interested in recognizing schools that show creative approaches that lower dropout rates.

For information, send E-mail to calexand@jcpenney.com or go to www.jcpenney.com.

Awards

Microsoft Winners

Forty-four high schools from 20 different states have won two-year grants for more than $1.5 million in software licenses from Microsoft, licenses that will allow teachers and students to tap into the latest technology.

One of the grant recipients, the Fremont County school district in Shoshoni, Wyoming, will use its new software programs to continue the district's curriculum overhaul so students can learn new information technology skills.

Winners of the Microsoft grants agree to post curriculum and related work on the Academic Cooperative Web site (www.academicoop.isu.edu/), which is used by educators around the world.

On the site, you'll find lesson plans in three categories: core skills and application development, programming, and Internet Web development.

To apply for 1999 curriculum grants, check the Web site for application materials next October.

Health Education Awards

In honor of two individuals who changed the lives of NEA members through their words and actions, the NEA Health Information Network maintains two educational funds, the Ryan White Memorial HIV Education Fund and the Vivian Roy Bowser Cancer Education Fund.

Both were created and supported by NEA members to supplement NEA HIN's programs on HIV/AIDS and breast cancer education.

To further honor the memories of these courageous individuals, NEA has established two education awards to recognize members and staff contributing to these fields. NEA HIN is now accepting applications for the awards, which will be presented at the 1998 NEA Representative Assembly.

Heads Up

For selection criteria and nomination forms, leave a message with your name and address at 800/718-8387 or send E-mail to NEAHIN1@aol.com.

Events

Child Abuse

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month, and the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse has launched a new program to help parents cope with the stresses that sometimes lead to abuse. For more on this and other programs, call 800-CHILDREN.

Language, Race, Power

"Language, Race, and Power in Schools" is the theme of the National Coalition of Education Activists' annual conference, July 30 through August 2 in Washington, D.C.

Presenters include keynote speaker Tony Baez, dean of Hostos Community College in New York City, Enid Lee, Michelle Fine, and the editors of the education journal *Rethinking Schools*. For more information, contact NCEA, P. O. Box 679, Rhinebeck, NY 12572, 914/876-4580, or send E-mail to rfbs@aol.com.

Chill Out on Science

"Polar Connections" is the theme of this year's National Science and Technology Week, April 26-May 2, sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

As part of the week-long activities, the Foundation has lined up scientific and engineering experts who will provide answers through a coldline (1/888-718-3026) only on Wednesday, April 29, or online at asknstw@nsf.gov, throughout the week.

PBS will also air "Live From the Poles," an electronic field trip through the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

For more information about the week's schedule of events and related activities, call 800/682-2716 or go to NSTW's Web site at www.nsf.gov/od/lpa/nstw/.

Get Ready To Exercise

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Project ACES (All Children Exercising Simultaneously) begun by New Jersey NEA member Len Sanders.

ACES Day is set for May 10 this year and has the backing of dozens of organizations, including the President's Council on Physical Fitness, plus President Clinton and a host of other celebrities.

Sanders expects children and adults from all 50 states and 50 foreign countries to join in the fitness celebration, which will begin at 10 a.m. on the east coast. Last year's event drew participants from 60,000 schools around the world. For details about this year's ACES celebration, go to http://members.aol.com/acesday/aces.html.

Web Winners

Math Site

Life by the Numbers, a new series airing on PBS this month has a Web site offering online copies of print materials accompanying the special and much more. Call it up at www.mathlife.wqed.org or www.pbs.org/math.

Borrow up to $25,000* at a preferred interest rate.

The NEA Credit Plan® personal loan lets you borrow from $3,000 to $25,000 at a low, preferred interest rate. Use it to consolidate your high-interest bills, cover tuition costs, or take care of other important expenses.† You'll save with the low Annual Percentage Rate (APR), and there's no collateral required.

Low 14.90% APR.
With a fixed APR of 14.90%, no matter how much you borrow, it makes real economic sense to pay off higher interest debts or make that important purchase.

Affordable Monthly Payments.
Based on the amount you borrow, you can take up to 84 months to repay, making your monthly payments even more affordable.

Tailored to Your Needs.
Apply for any amount between $3,000 and $25,000. There's no application fee, loan origination fee or prepayment penalties. And you can apply right over the phone.

Compare the First Year Savings!				
Average Loan Balance	$3,000	$10,000	$15,000	$25,000
Annual Finance Charges				
Household Finance Personal Loan (21.75% APR)	$617	$2,056	$3,084	$5,140
Bank One Personal Loan (20.49% APR)	$580	$1,933	$2,900	$4,833
NEA Credit Plan (14.90% APR)	*$418*	*$1,393*	*$2,090*	*$3,484*
FIRST YEAR YOU SAVE UP TO	$199	$663	$994	$1,656

All rates are as of 11/10/97. Annual finance charges are estimated. Comparison is based on a 60 month term fixed rate loan.

For more information or to apply for the NEA Credit Plan, call toll free:

1-800-468-7632

Please mention this code when calling – GY7G

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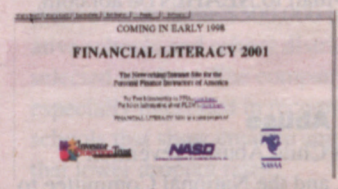
Heads Up

Gardening
Just in time for spring, the National Gardening Association offers a wide range of materials, including information about gardening grants, contests, and garden projects through its home Web site at www2.garden.org/nga/.

Financial Literacy
Three financial information organizations—the National Association of Securities Dealers, the North American Securities Administrators Association, and the Investor Protection Trust—are out to improve Americans' financial IQ, and they're starting with kids. Their program, *Financial Literacy 2001*, hopes to train 15,000 high school teachers in all 50 states about how to teach personal finance. Go to www.financial-literacy.org.



Online Encyclopedia
Students who don't need the detail contained in a typical set of encyclopedias might want to consult a free encyclopedia online. You'll find about 17,000 articles, reports *USA Today*, at www.encyclopedia.com.

Voter Literacy
Project Vote Smart, which has promoted voter literacy for a long time, recently unveiled the Vote Smart Classroom—just in time for this year's elections. On the Web at www.votesmart.org, Vote Smart Classroom offers lesson plans, issue briefs, civics lessons, plus links to other sites. Call 800/622-SMART with questions.

Safety City
There's a new interactive Web site to teach kids to be safe. Safety City, at www.nhsta.dot.gov/kids, is an animated interactive site that teaches basic transportation safety including bicycle, school bus, pedestrian, seat belt, car seat, and air safety.

School Locators
Want to contact schools from other states, but don't have their addresses?

CONFUSED ABOUT THE NEW TAX LAWS?

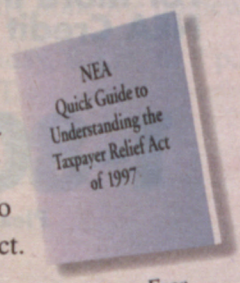
CALL TODAY TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM TREMENDOUS FIRST-TIME EVER SAVINGS!

1(800)637-4636

Thanks to the recent changes in our tax laws, Americans are finding it easier than ever to:

• Buy a first home • Pay for higher education • Plan for retirement

Don't miss this valuable opportunity to put the new tax laws to work for you. Call 1(800)637-4636, Monday-Friday, 8am to 8pm (or Saturday, 9am to 1pm) ET to receive your FREE NEA Quick Guide to Understanding the Taxpayer Relief Act.



Yours Free

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Heads Up

At www.gsn.org/hotlist/index.html, you can access all kindergarten through 12th grade schools in the United States, organized alphabetically by state.

Contests

Cyber Contest

The 1997-98 Digital Chisel 3 Student Project Contest invites students to submit their creative work using *Digital Chisel 3*, the new Java software for young cybernauts. Entries will be judged on creativity, links to classroom content, and the use of features such as animation and sound. Grand prize: $1,000 savings bond. Deadline: April 15. For guidelines, call Pierian Spring Software at 800/472-8578.

Announcements

Want To Be in Pictures?

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Council for Teachers of English are asking for teachers' help in creating a series of films, dramatizing works by significant American authors. The series will debut next year.

If you have ideas for titles and writers to dramatize, or could participate in creating support materials for the series or putting together a guide to resources on the Internet, send an E-mail to Eric Crump at ecrump@ncte.org. Or write to Tim Hallinan at Hallinan Consulting, P. O. Box 4400, Venice, CA 90294.

Stories Wanted

NEA member and book publisher Rocquie Warde is looking for classroom life anecdotes, vignettes, and story excerpts, from both teachers and students. The material will be included in *An Apple for the Teacher*, a new book from Creative Writers of the Southwest.

Half of the book's profits will be donated to youth and education—and schools contributing stories will be at the top of the recipient list.

Send stories or questions to Creative Writers of the Southwest, P.O. Box 39128, Phoenix, AZ 85069 or Fax 602/589-5186. Be sure to include your name, address, and a number where you can be reached.

Write It Down

The *Christian Science Monitor* is looking for 600-word, first-person accounts from teachers at all levels about teaching. The best will be considered for a new weekly education section. Those published will receive a small honorarium.

Monitor editors are interested in topics such as how you teach chemistry, how your class responds to Mark Twain, your favorite teaching technique, why theater is important, something that bothers you, and so on.

Send your ideas via E-mail to Amelia Newcomb at newcomba@csps.com or call 800/288-7090, ext. 2440.

Finding the right homeowners insurance plan doesn't require exhaustive research.

How do you choose one? Simple. Just use the homeowners insurance program the National Education Association has sponsored since 1968. You'll not only get good coverage from Horace Mann, but as an NEA member, you receive some special benefits.

To find out more about the NEA Homeowners Insurance Program, you can do all your research with one phone call to your local Horace Mann agent. Or call toll-free **1-800-999-1030**, press **3**, Monday - Friday, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Central time.

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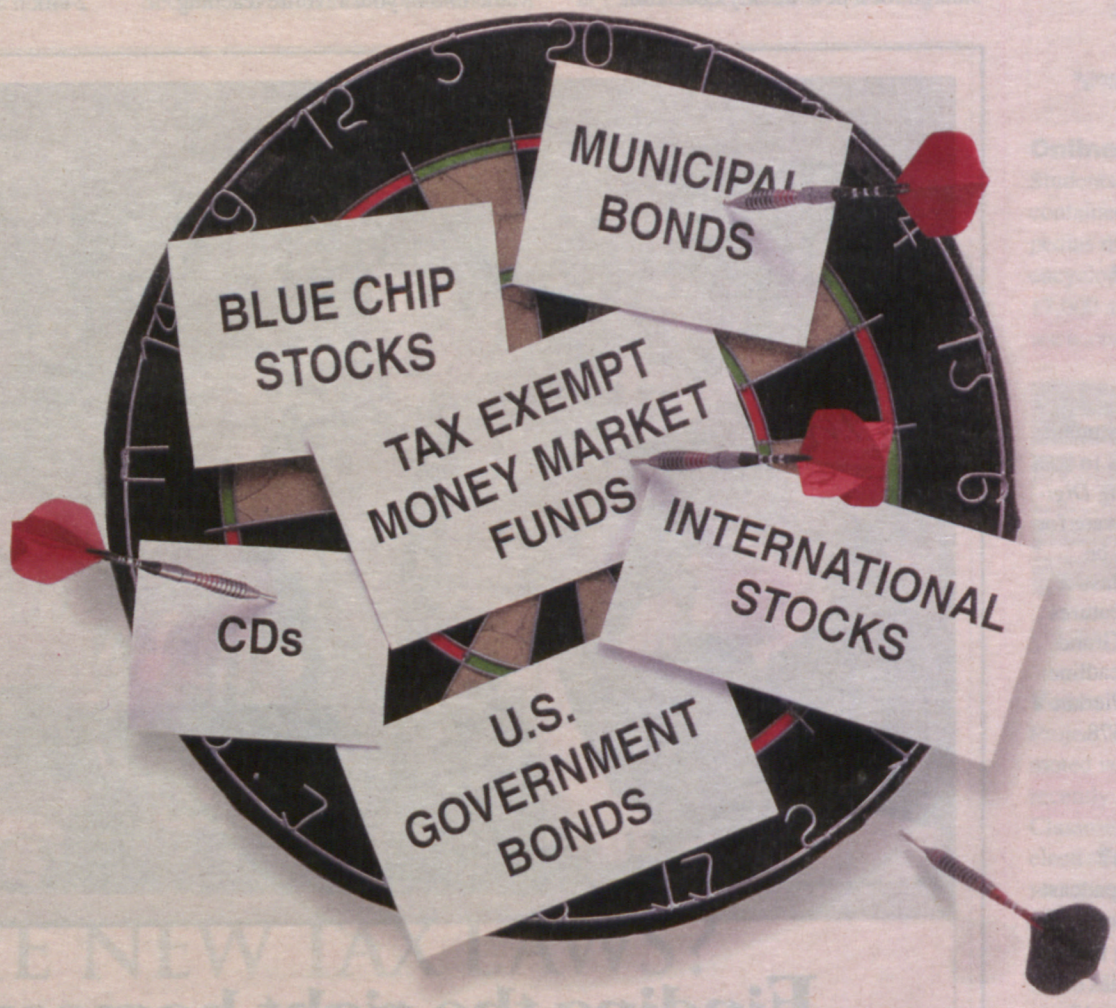
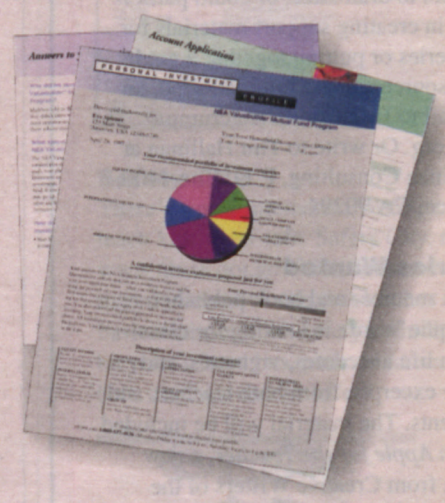


Call today for your FREE Personal Investment Plan and get on target!

Whether you're saving for a home, college tuition or planning your retirement, you can invest with confidence knowing that the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program can help you hit the mark.

To receive your Personal Investment Plan, all you need to do is fill out a brief questionnaire. One of our licensed representatives will personally review your answers and provide you with a free computer-scored* analysis of you as an investor. Your analysis will include recommended investment strategies along with a wide range of well-known mutual funds** so you can put your plan into action right away.

To receive your questionnaire call 1-800-637-4636, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET, and let us help point you in the right direction.



The NEA Personal Investment Plan

Call today to get started 1-800-637-4636.

NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program

*Software developed in conjunction with Ibbotson Associates, a financial software, data and consulting firm.

**If you open an account, an annual investment advisory fee for the program will apply.

Investment advice reflected in the Personal Investment Plan is offered by NEA's MBC Investor Services Company, a Registered Investment Advisor. Related investment advice on the mutual funds available as part of the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program is offered through Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, Member NASD. Securities are offered through Nationwide Investment Svcs. Corporation, Member NASD, (in the state of Michigan). For more complete information on the mutual funds available, including charges and expenses, please contact Nationwide Investment Services Corporation at (800) 634-0025 to request prospectuses. Please read the prospectuses carefully before you invest or send money.

MFNT0498

In the Light Lane

There's a Cricket in My Neck

My cousin did her student teaching with a group of kindergartners. During a lesson on animal sounds, she understood the influence of television.

When she asked, "What sound does a frog make?" one boy called out, "Bud!"

Rachell Hammonds
Sylacauga, Alabama

As I was checking off my first graders' homework, I noticed that José hadn't turned in his.

I asked if he had done his homework, and he said yes, but that his dog had eaten it.

I've heard that excuse a million times, so I figured he just didn't do it.

José went to get his backpack and returned with his homework envelope and a guilty look on his face. As I took his papers out of the envelope, I noticed that they were damp, wrinkled, and full of teeth marks.

As it turned out, his dog really did eat his homework! But I was still able to read it—and José got the credit.

Karen Amberly Joe
Moreno Valley, California

My second grader wanted to buy two cartons of milk for 50 cents for lunch. He took out of his backpack one quarter, one nickel, and one dime.

"You need 10 cents more," I said.

He dug deeper and found a dime.

I quickly said, "Twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five, forty, forty-five, fifty—you've got it!"

"Wow," he cried, "I didn't know you could count!"

Eliza Garcia
Kingsville, Texas

I gathered my fifth graders around me and told them that I would be leaving early on Friday to attend my graduation ceremony for my master's degree. The kids immediately began to clap for me and cheer my accomplishment.

Then one student tapped me on the side and asked, "Are they clapping because you're graduating, or because you won't be here on Friday?"

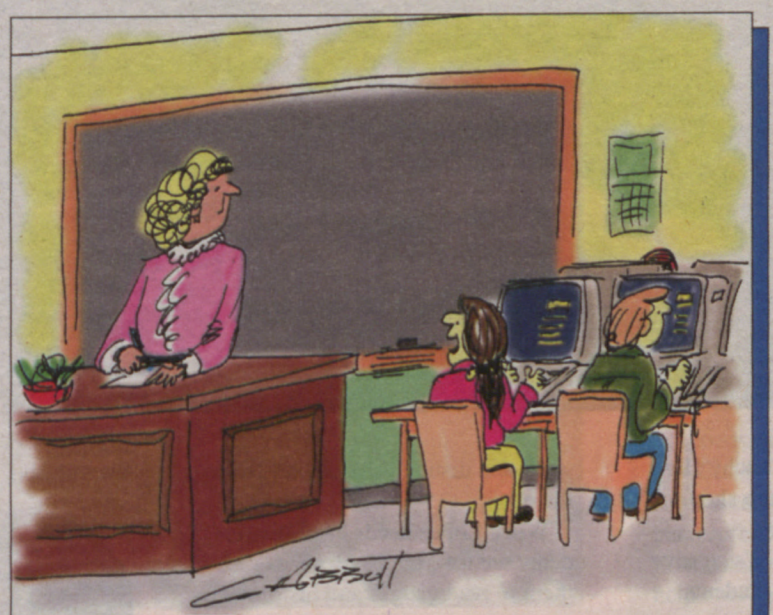
Kevin Mulroe
Columbia, Maryland

My Applied Biology for the Technologies class was reviewing for the semester exam by taking turns reading questions and giving the answers in a self-directed competition.

During the section on the circulatory system, the questioner read, "What causes hypertension?"

Without a second's pause, the responder answered, "Students." The judge immediately awarded the points.

Melissa Strong
North Charleston, South Carolina



"You're WRITING a note to my mother? Wow, how quaint!"

While I was performing my duties as a speech/language pathologist in the kindergarten classroom, a five-year-old noticed the wrist splints I was wearing.

With deep compassion in his eyes, he said, "I know why you're wearing those. My aunt has purple tunnel too!"

Marilyn K. Foster
Oak Park, Illinois

One day in my third grade music class, a student came to me and said he didn't like Mozart very much. I asked why, and he responded, "I tried calling Mozart on the phone last night, and he never answered. I tried many times."

I explained that Mozart has been dead for 200 years. The student retorted, "Then why did you write his phone number on the wall underneath his name?"

I looked over at the wall to the poster I had made. It read: "Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791."

Michael Fridgen
Pine City, Minnesota

As a bus driver, I often substitute for other drivers. One day as I was taking home the kindergartners, I had one child left over.

I checked the roster, but that didn't help, so I asked, "Sweetheart, do you know where you live?"

"Yes," he answered. "With my grandpa."

Eloisa Chavez
Belen, New Mexico

Preparing my first grade students for a visit to the local senior citizens home, I said, "Some day we will all be elderly."

One boy cried, "Yeah, but you'll get there a lot quicker than any of us!"

Connie Connely
Catoosa, Oklahoma

After I told my kindergartners that I had a frog in my throat, a student replied, "I've never had a frog in my throat, but I've had a cricket in my neck!"

Tammie Canada
Brownsville, Tennessee

I received some guinea eggs from a neighbor to hatch in the classroom. As I was telling the students about the eggs, one of the girls looked at me and said, "I didn't know guinea pigs hatched from eggs!"

Donna Goehring
Wamego, Kansas

Recently, when discussing "The Most Important Thing I've Learned," one of my fifth graders responded, "Never abbreviate the word *assessment*."

Pretty good advice, don't you think?

Diane Ebner
Salem, Oregon

Loony Literature

During a lesson on the book *The Westing Game*, we read that the blowing snow had formed buttresses on the cliffs. In an effort to bolster my students' vocabulary, I asked if anyone knew what a buttress was.

One of my students, who recently had moved into a house that had buttresses, volunteered to answer, so I figured he might be able to tell us. I burst out laughing at his reply: "It's a female butler."

Bob Feist
Circle, Montana

On my freshman *Romeo and Juliet* exam, I asked whether the teenage couple was truly in love, or was it just infatuation.

One student replied that it was, in fact, true love because the couple had "exchanged vowels."

Penny Cavin
Omaha, Nebraska

After my senior British literature class completed a unit on *The Canterbury Tales*, a student raised her hand and asked, "What was the name of the boat?"

Puzzled, I asked, "What boat?"

"The boat Chaucer's pilgrims were sailing to Canterbury," she said.

Sarah J. Kennedy
Geneva, Ohio

After my students read the story of Cinderella, I told them that the term "Cinderella" was often used today—even in sports. I asked, "What do you think a Cinderella basketball team is?"

One quick-witted boy responded, "Oh, that's a team that has a pumpkin for a coach."

Jan Bagby
Kingwood, West Virginia

Got Laughs?

■ Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, E-mail NEAToday@nea.org.

■ Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

Fine Motor Skills

Chris Crewell/Sacramento Bee

California auto shop teacher **Frank Lopez** has been blind for most of his life and has never driven a car, but he knows automobile parts inside-out.

And now, with Lopez on board, Sacramento's C.K. McClatchy High School is able to offer auto shop for the first time in a decade.

In the classroom, Lopez's sturdy mechanic's hands check students' work and distinguish one part from the other.

When Lopez needs eyes, his students see for him. He depends on them to read gauges and instruments. This interaction works for everyone.

"The students feel that they are helping me," Lopez says. "But all that time, they are actively learning."

Lopez drives his students to overcome life's obstacles.

"They have a chance to see a visually impaired person at work," he says. "Inside they say, 'I too can have some success. I too can achieve.'

"Everybody has a limitation—attitude, temper," he continues. "Mine happens to be lack of vision. But you do not give up, you find a way to work around it."

Lopez has learned that humor enhances the teaching process. His students have learned that seeing is not knowing.

"I tell them, if I can do this with my eyes closed, you can do it too. It all depends on how committed you are to your goals."

Heavy Medal Hopes

In the world of sports, they call it a Cinderella story. Without a coach or even one major victory under his belt, Vermont social studies teacher **Marc Gilbertson** shot from relative obscurity to a spot on the U.S. cross-country ski team bound for the 1998 Winter Olympics.

Gilbertson, who teaches at Lamoille Union High School in Hyde Park, had always dreamed of skiing at the Olympics—even though he had never skied well enough to qualify for a World Cup race.

So he started training three years ago, and last December, in a 30-kilometer qualifying race, he beat out 48 top skiers. As his students cheered him on, he crossed the finish line more than two minutes ahead of the second-place skier—and won a place on the Olympic team.

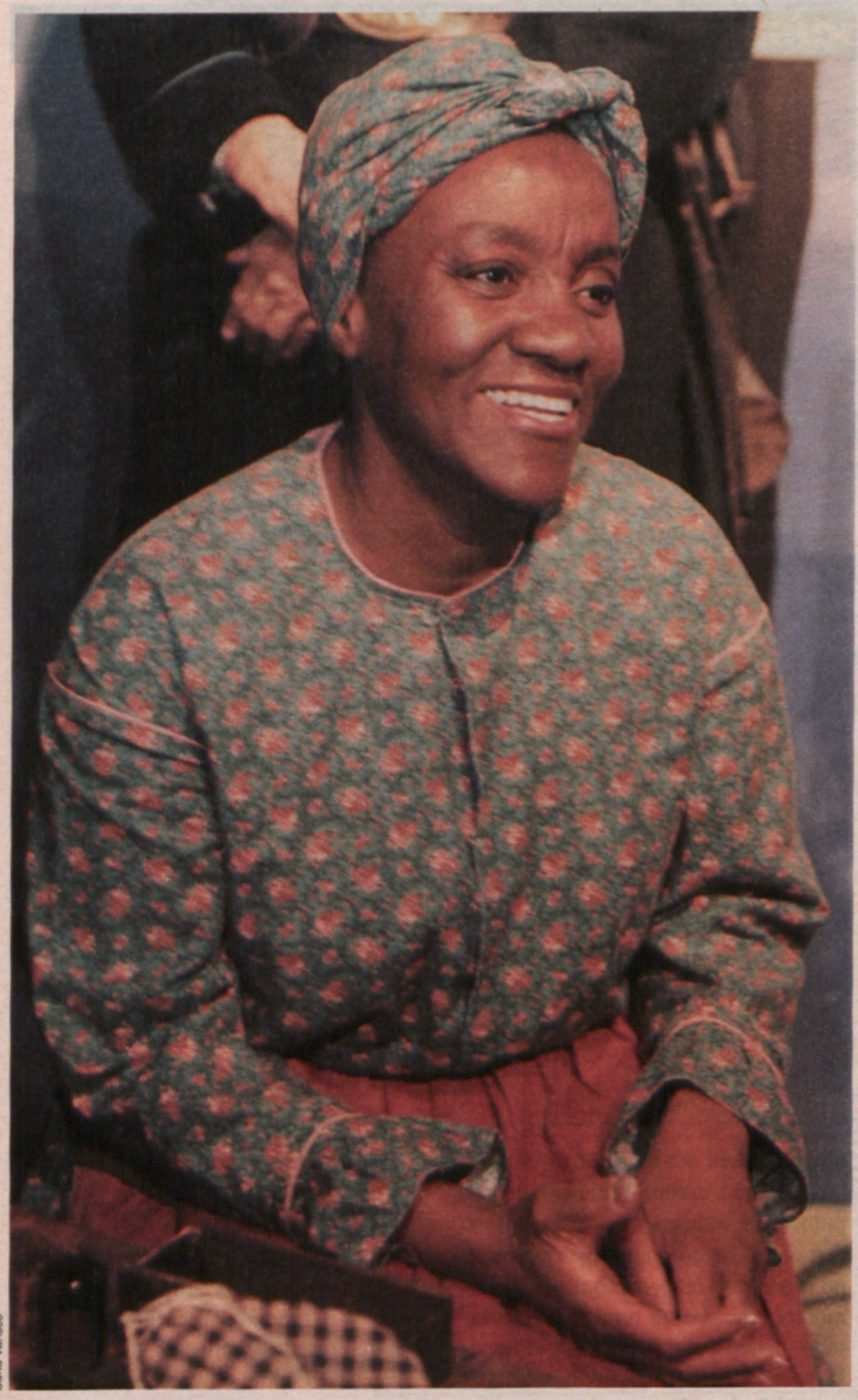
"Every now and then, I thought maybe I was wasting my time, but people here have been so supportive, and the students have been wonderful the whole time," Gilbertson says.

Gilbertson trained by skiing in the dark before and after school with a light strapped on his head. Last fall, he took a leave of absence from teaching to get ready for the Olympics.

At presstime, Gilbertson was set to race in the 50-kilometer freestyle.

"All I want to do is ski my best there," he said before leaving for Japan. "I've been training well and anything can happen."

Art Huse



Carla Varisco

Past **Performance**

On stage she is Susan Petty, a field slave. Or maybe Ann Wright, a launderer and cook. Or perhaps Harriet Tubman, a runaway slave guiding others to freedom. And sometimes she's a prosperous middle-class African-American woman of 1865.

Other times, she is **Valarie Boyer**, a history teacher at H.B. duPont Middle School in Hockessin, Delaware.

In "Songs of a Faithful People," the one-woman show that Boyer wrote and performs for community groups and schools, she tells her characters' stories by reenacting their lives. Alternating Negro spirituals and spoken monologues, she depicts slave life on a Delaware plantation and the terror of escaping.

"I bring history alive so that the audience can learn from it," Boyer says. "I tap into their imagination and ignite their interest. It makes them want to go out and learn more."

Boyer spends her summers at Fort Delaware, a former Union prison, where she dresses in period costume and describes life at the Fort during the Civil War.

During Black History Month, she is in demand to perform at local schools.

Back in her own classroom, Boyer uses her performance skills to help students understand history. And when the textbook misses a point, she supplements it. "I add that little flavoring to make it better," she says. "A few herbs and spices."

Feel Like a **Million Bucks**

After Seattle teacher **Janice Lind-Sherman** won a whopping $8 million in the Washington Lottery five years ago, she knew she could walk away from teaching and into a life of luxury anytime. But the thought of quitting hasn't crossed her mind.

"You can only take so many cruises," jokes Lind-Sherman, a first and second grade teacher at Martin Luther King Elementary School.

"Some people think I'm nuts to keep teaching," she continues. "But I have this love of teaching, and I don't want to give it up quite yet."

She and her husband channel much of their $280,000 yearly lottery income into their favorite charities.

The Martin Luther King School Dream Foundation that Lind-Sherman founded is $120,000 strong—and will begin awarding scholarships in 1999, when the first group of her former students graduates from high school.

Ellen Banner

Ready for **Anything**

Floods, fires, earthquakes—when disaster strikes, the state of Alaska calls on **JoAnne Fine**, a paraprofessional at Finger Lake Elementary School in Wasilla, to help coordinate emergency services.

Fine has trained at the federal Emergency Management Institute and now travels the state to assist with disaster relief.

After a devastating fire in 1996, Fine spent most of the summer managing a disaster recovery center, where she helped 1,200 people get their lives back together.

When the Koyukuk River in Alaska's interior flooded, Fine helped evacuate a village just above the Arctic Circle.

"I saw an entire village picked up and set down on the floor of an auditorium," she says.

After getting the residents settled, Fine rushed back to the flood site for Operation Dog Lift, to save the village's 60 dogs from the raging water.

"I've seen so many odd things that nature can do. There's nothing you can do to prevent it," she says. "But when you go in and help people, you come out feeling like a better human being, because you were there and made one ounce of difference."

Fine credits her school district for giving her time off when she's needed at a disaster site. In return, she has developed site-based emergency plans for several local schools. If disaster strikes, school staff will know how to respond.

"It has been wonderful to take a totally different part of my life and integrate it into my job," Fine says.

Jeff Schultz

Money

Coming to Terms

Buying or refinancing a home? Here are some terms you might come across.

- An **adjustable rate mortgage** (ARM) is a loan with an introductory interest rate that "adjusts" on a specific anniversary date—which might be one year, five years, or 10 years in the future. When it adjusts, you may pay less or more, depending on market conditions at the time. ARMs are popular when interest rates are high because they make homes more affordable.
- A **fixed-rate mortgage** is a loan with an interest rate that is fixed for the term of the loan, which might be 15, 20, or 30 years.
- **Amortization** is a payment plan that allows the borrower to pay off the principal gradually, month by month. Most mortgages amortize—that is, you repay a portion of principal with each payment. In contrast, an interest-only loan does not amortize or reduce the principal.
- A **binder** is a preliminary agreement that gives a buyer a right to purchase real estate for a certain period under specific terms. It includes the payment of "earnest money" intended to show that the buyer is serious. As a buyer, if you change your mind, you typically lose the earnest money.
- **Closing costs** represent additional costs you pay to acquire a piece of property over and above the purchase price. They include such charges as property taxes that the seller may have already paid, title search, legal fees, and bank fees—and must be paid at closing.
- **Points** are additional interest that the lender charges, which are paid at closing. A point represents 1 percent of the amount of the loan. So one lender might charge 7 percent with no points, and another 6½ percent with two points. To figure out which is the better deal, you need to know how long you're planning to stay in the house. The longer you stay, the more advantageous it is to take the lower interest rate.
- Your **home equity** is the dollar difference between the market value of your home and your current mortgage balance. A **home equity loan** allows you to access this cash without selling your home, which you would use as collateral.

Decisions, Decisions

Mortgage Rates Take a Dive

It's a great time to buy or refinance. But how much mortgage can you afford?

It's spring. The economy is up. Interest rates are down. This is the perfect time to buy, refinance, or renovate a home.

Home buyers have one question when mortgage interest rates move lower: Should I lock in or try to time the bottom of the market?

"Lock in your interest rates," advises Keith Gumbinger, vice president of HSH Associates, a firm that compiles data about mortgage rates and trends. "Don't try to time the bottom of the market. Lots of people get burned that way."

As this issue was going to press, rates were tantalizingly low—15-year mortgages were available in the 6½ percent range, 30-year mortgages for just over 7 percent.

"Right now rates are as low as they're going to go," says Gumbinger. "But we don't expect the window of opportunity to slam shut on anybody."

The drop in rates during the fourth quarter of 1997 and the first quarter of 1998 was a result of problems in Asia, says Gumbinger.

"Money started coming into the U.S. and going into Treasury securities, which brought rates down," he explains.

Gumbinger doesn't expect the happy situation to last into summer, but he doesn't expect a significant rise in rates either.

"They're more likely to go up than down," he notes. "But we expect favorable interest rates for some time."

If you're house hunting or thinking about refinancing, one of the best places to start is on the HSH Web site at www.hsh.com. You'll find a wealth of information about mortgage rates, closing costs, mortgage qualifying information, and even help if you've got impaired credit.

Qualifying rules for mortgages have not changed much in recent years. That's because the bank where you get your mortgage probably won't keep that loan on its books. Instead, it sells your mortgage in the "secondary mortgage market," where it's combined with other mortgages, which are then sliced up and sold as securities.

To qualify for resale, a mortgage must be taken out by a borrower who falls within a certain "debt-to-income ratio." One industry standard requires that monthly mortgage costs represent no more than 28 percent of your monthly income, or total debt be no more than 36 percent of your income. However, some lenders will allow you to qualify for a larger mortgage.

At the HSH Web site, you can download a financial calculator that will help you figure out how much of a mortgage you can handle. The calculator also shows you what you can expect to pay in closing costs.

For example, suppose you are looking at a $100,000 home and expect to pay 8¼ percent on your mortgage—which is, of course, high by today's standards.

The calculator shows you that if you put 20 percent down, you would need a monthly income of $2,904 to qualify for the mortgage and about $24,458 at closing. Your monthly payment would be $813.32. By tinkering with these numbers, you can target exactly how much house you can afford.

And by looking at the current rates, you can decide what type of mortgage is best for you. For example, this is a great time to lock in a 15-year mortgage—at the end of January, there were many available in the 6½ percent range.

But one-year adjustable rate mortgages are not very attractive now. Rates in the 5½ percent range are not much of an incentive to gamble that rates will come down in the next year.

—Mary Rowland

Worksheet

Is owning or refinancing a home in your future?

To get an idea of what you can afford, check this chart:

Loan amount	Monthly Payments on a loan that is 30 years @ 7%	15 years @ 7%
$100,000	$ 798	$1,410
$120,000	$ 931	$1,589
$130,000	$ 998	$1,679
$140,000	$1,064	$1,769
$150,000	$1,131	$1,859
$160,000	$1,197	$1,949
$170,000	$1,264	$2,039
$180,000	$1,330	$2,129
$190,000	$1,397	$2,218
$200,000	$1,463	$2,308

Source: NEA Member Benefits

Resources

Turn to NEA Member Benefits if you're looking for a new mortgage or want to refinance an existing one. With the NEA Home Financing Program®, you'll get competitive rates, instant prequalification, and a fast loan decision—all over the phone. You'll also get a $150 member rebate after closing.

Plus, you can take advantage of a low down-payment option and a more flexible qualifying ratio (debt-to-income ratio).

For more information, call the NEA Mortgage QuickLine® at 800/NEA-4-YOU (800/632-4968), Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–midnight ET, and speak with a mortgage counselor. Home equity loans are also available.

Eye on Retirement

The Long-Term Disability Risk

What would be the financial impact on your life if you were unable to work due to a serious injury or illness? Could you live without your salary for six months, a year—perhaps longer? If you couldn't, then you need disability insurance.

NEA member Lisa Rueschoff, a 31-year-old family and consumer science teacher at Fort Zumwalt South Middle School in St. Peters, Missouri, purchased disability insurance when she and her husband decided to start a family.

"I taught in one school district for four years, then I moved and changed districts—and lost all my sick leave," Rueschoff explains. "I'd just gotten married, and we wanted to have kids, but I didn't have any sick days to cover me during the period I'd be home with a new baby. So we bought the coverage so that I wouldn't have to take unpaid time off from work."

Rueschoff is enrolled in the NEA Income Protection Plan, which replaced a significant portion of her income for her entire eight-week maternity leave last fall.

"I don't know what we'd have done without the policy," she says. "We're planning on having more children, so we're definitely going to hang on to it."

Most people have life insurance, but they never think that they might become disabled. Yet between the ages of 25 and 55, you're more than twice as likely to become disabled as you are to die.

You may already have disability insurance through your employer. If you do, find out what percentage of your income you'll receive if you're disabled. Ideally, a policy should cover 60 to 70 percent of your current salary. Be sure to ask about waiting periods—typically, you must wait three to six months after becoming disabled for benefits to begin. Also ask about benefit periods—that is, how long you'll receive payouts.

If you don't have disability insurance, consider buying individual coverage. Here are some features to look for in a policy:

- *Noncancelable*, which guarantees you the right to renew your policy every year. The insurer can't change the benefits or raise the premium without raising it for everybody. With a policy that is merely guaranteed renewable, you're subject to rate increases.
- *Benefits and coverage good to age 65.* Policies that pay benefits for only a year or two are relatively inexpensive and might sound like a good deal—especially since only about 10 percent of disabilities last longer than a year. But what if you're one of the unlucky 10 percent? You need protection against the worst that can happen, which means a steady disability income to age 65.
- *The right definition of disability.* The most expensive policies cover you if you can't perform the major duties of your own job. But such coverage may not be the wisest use of your insurance dollar. Take a look instead at a less expensive income-replacement policy. It doesn't cover your job at all—rather, it looks at how much you're earning.
- *Residual benefits*, which will replace a portion of your income if you're partially disabled and can work only part-time.
- *Waiver of premium.* When you become disabled, you no longer have to pay for your coverage. This waiver is a smart buy.

Disability insurance is expensive, and costs vary widely from company to company, so consult at least two different insurance agents. For more information on the NEA Income Protection Plan, call Member Benefits at 800/637-4636.

Mary Butkus

The NEA Income Protection Plan helped Missouri teacher Lisa Rueschoff take some time off with her new baby, without getting behind financially.

Financial Finds

No More ATM Fees

Thanks to the No-Surcharge ATM Alliance, launched last year by Credit Union Cooperative Systems of California, it's getting easier to avoid ATM surcharges, those $1 or so per-transaction fees imposed by banks on noncustomers.

The Alliance now includes 300 credit unions and 120 banks in 11 states. At the group's 2,800 ATMs bearing the no-surcharge logo, you can make an unlimited number of transactions surcharge-free. And a recent survey by Bank Rate Monitor found that some 125 banks and S&Ls nationwide let noncustomers use their ATMs free of charge.

To find a no-surcharge ATM near you, call the No-Surcharge Alliance (888/748-3266), or check Bank Rate Monitor's list on the Web at www.bankrate.com.

Reverse Mortgages

The National Center for Home Equity Conversion (NCHEC), a nonprofit organization that educates consumers about reverse mortgages, recently compiled a state-by-state list of NCHEC-preferred reverse mortgages lenders.

These lenders have agreed to abide by NCHEC's Lender Code of Conduct. They also have access to NCHEC software that produces an individually customized, 12-page "Personal Reverse Mortgage Analysis" for consumers.

To obtain the list of preferred lenders, send $1 and a self-addressed, stamped, business-sized envelope to: NCHEC Preferred, Room 115, 7373 147th St., Apple Valley, MN 55124. You'll also receive a copy of NCHEC's new brochure, *What You Don't Know About Reverse Mortgages CAN Hurt You.*

Organizing Your Finances

If your financial life is in chaos, try the Homefile Financial Planning Organizer Kit. Created by two financial planners, Homefile consists of 23 preprinted file dividers with headings like "Autos," "Retirement Accounts," and "Warranties," designed to fit into a hanging file or accordion folder.

Each divider tells you exactly which documents to file in the corresponding folder and how long to keep them for tax purposes or other reasons. To obtain a kit, call 800/695-3453. The cost is $19.95.

Educated Investor

My spouse and I both earn good incomes, but we can't seem to get a handle on our money. We're always broke or in debt with nothing to show for it. Where do we start?

Get a software program like Quicken or Money 98 and start using it. That will help you get a handle on what you're earning and what you're spending. Your priorities should be to:

- Get out of debt. Paying off debt is always your best first investment. Consumer debt, such as credit card debt, carries interest rates of around 18 percent—and there is no investment that will pay you that much interest guaranteed.
- Put money in tax-advantaged accounts first. Start with your 403(b) or 401(k) plan at work.
- Pay yourself first. Open a savings or investing account and commit to putting a specific amount in at a regular interval, say the first day of each month. The amount is less important than being consistent.
- Build your dreams into your budget. Think of your budgeting as "trade-off spending." If you spend it today, you could be trading off next year's vacation or that new car. Think before you spend.

—NEA Member Benefits

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G465

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Name

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Home Phone ( ) | Business Phone ( )

Social Security Number | Date of Birth

Mother's Maiden Name (For identification only)

About your finances

Employer | Position

Years There | Annual Salary $

Other Income* $ | Source

*Alimony, child support, or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if you do not wish it considered as a basis for repayment.

Residence: ❑ Own ❑ Buying ❑ Rent ❑ Other

Monthly Payment $

Request for additional card

Name of Authorized User | Relationship

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X Signature Date

Annual Fee	None.
Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	NEA *Platinum Plus* account: 15.1% for purchases, which may vary. NEA School Days account: 15.6% for purchases, which may vary.
Variable-Rate Information	Your APR may vary. The APR is determined by adding a margin to the highest U.S. Prime Rate as published in *The Wall Street Journal* on the 15th of March, June, September, and December. For the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, the margin is 6.6% percentage points, for the NEA School Days account the margin is 7.1% percentage points. On December 15, 1997 the U.S. Prime Rate was 8.5%.
Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	At least 25 days from statement closing date.
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Transaction Fee for Cash Advances and Fees for Paying Late or Exceeding the Credit Limit	Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks: 1% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Late Payment Fee: $10. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $10.

†The current promotional APR offer for all cash advances and balance transfers made with either account is 5.9% through your first five statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR for all new and outstanding cash advance balances will be calculated according to the Variable-Rate Information appearing at left. The current indexed APR for cash advances is 15.1% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, or 15.6% for the NEA School Days account, each APR may vary. Cash advances cannot be used to pay off or pay down any MBNA® issued account. MBNA may allocate your monthly payments to your promotional APR balance(s) before your nonpromotional APR balance(s).

††If your application is approved with a credit line of less than $5,500, you will receive an NEA School Days Credit Card. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, e.g., MasterPurchase Protection is not available and maximum Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance is up to $300,000. Certain restrictions apply to these and other benefits as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

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The information about the costs of the card described in this application is accurate as of 1/98. The information may have changed after that date. To find out what may have changed, call us at (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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My Turn

A Soul Lost and Found

When a student pushes your buttons, it's so easy to forget the important things.

By Allyson M. Buggs

I was experiencing the worst year of my teaching career. Out of 26 first graders, only three or four were ready or had the skills necessary to be successful in first grade.

Not only were my students low in ability, but they were also rude, disrespectful children who lacked the social skills needed to get along with their peers. In 24 years of teaching, I'd never had a class quite like this one.

I went home exhausted and depressed every day. For the first time in my life, I no longer looked forward to going to work each morning.

While there were several children in my class that I found difficult to work with, there was one little girl who really got to me.

She had a strange name that no one was sure how to pronounce. She was not the most attractive child. Her clothes were old and worn. She was unable to get along with anyone in the class. And, at times, she could be quite cruel.

She came to me not knowing the letters of her name. Even now, I don't know if I've been spelling it correctly —letters home go unanswered.

I don't think any one of these things would have turned me off a child, but the combination of them all, in addition to her habit of laughing about her poor behavior, shortened my fuse and started me down an unfamiliar road—the road of disliked children.

As the weeks went by, I found that I rarely directed a kind word to this child. My smiles and hugs were reserved for other children, but never for her. I patiently worked with other children struggling with concepts that should have been learned in kindergarten, but I seldom took any extra time to work with her.

She fell further behind, became more unpleasant, and I pushed myself further away. This pattern may have continued for the entire year if I hadn't decided to take her to the principal's office on a day when she was being more difficult than usual.

The head teacher was acting principal that day, so I proceeded to tell her the child's numerous sins, then I left.

Several minutes later, the head teacher came to my room and pulled me aside. She told me the little girl was very needy. I agreed, but said she never showed any remorse for anything she had done.

The head teacher looked at me in amazement, and then explained how the little girl had broken down and cried in heart-wrenching sobs when she was scolded for her behavior.

My eyes and heart were open, perhaps for the first time that year. I had let appearances and negative behavior cloud my usually clear and accurate understanding of children.

This child, this little girl, was a lost soul, and she had tried in her own imperfect ways to get my attention.

I had chosen to ignore her. I had let myself forget that negative behavior can mask pain and despair. I had forgotten that, at six years old, many children don't have the words to express their fears and worries. I had forgotten that I had dedicated myself to helping the child whom everyone else considered a lost cause.

I had forgotten so many aspects of my teaching philosophy that my soul was as lost as my student's.

That night, I didn't sleep as my mind struggled with the guilt. I realized I couldn't change the past, but I vowed the future would be different.

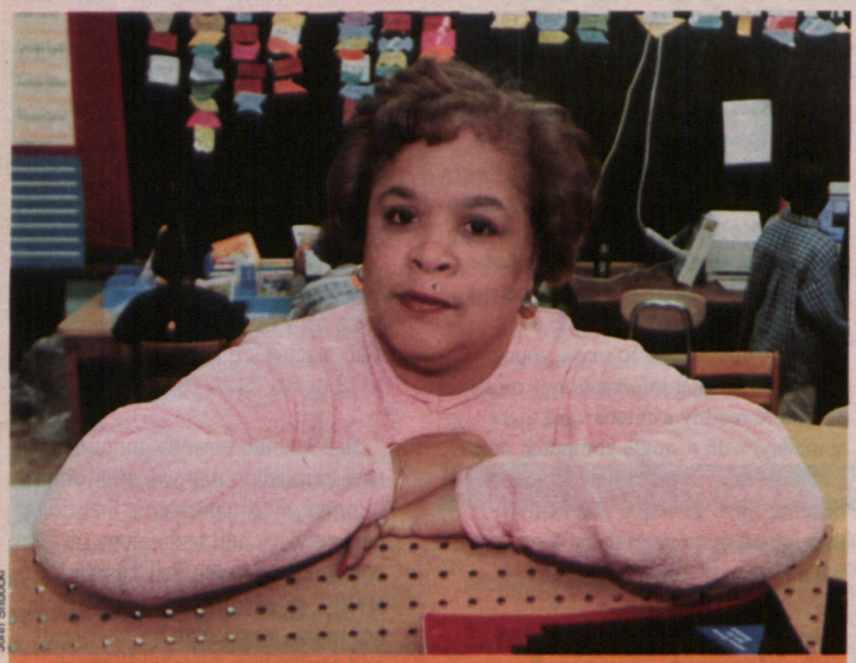
The next day, I armed myself with a smile and the renewed belief that I could make a difference in not just some of my children's lives, but in all of their lives. Not an earth-shattering difference, but perhaps just enough of a difference so that when they left my class at the end of the year, they would leave knowing that someone had truly cared about them.

I greeted that little girl with a sincere smile in the morning, and I trusted her with jobs I usually saved for someone else. I took the time to read with her and offered praise and encouragement along the way. I hugged her, and she hugged back.

Unfortunately, this isn't a fairy tale, and everyone doesn't live happily ever after. That little girl still manages to push buttons I didn't even know I had. And I still sometimes feel a harsh comment on the tip of my tongue.

But things are different and, yes, a bit better. I now see a little girl who needs kind words in order to have them to give to others, who needs praise for small accomplishments for her self-esteem to sustain failures, who needs love and affection just because everyone does.

I called this child a lost soul, but, in discovering her soul, I have regained my own. I hope that as long as I remember this special child, my soul and the souls of the children I teach will be handled with love, compassion, and understanding.



John Shuocki

Allyson M. Buggs teaches first and second grade at Kensington Avenue Elementary in Springfield, Massachusetts.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

Many *NEA Today* stories live on after they're first published. Some take a turn for the better, some worse. Some lead to other stories.

"Moving Targets," our February cover story about trying to reach—and teach—kids who move around a lot is an example of a story that's taken a sad turn.

The story featured Jaime Power, then a junior, at Worcester High in Worcester, Massachusetts. You may recall that Jaime switched schools five times in one year.

In the article, Jaime says, "I'm surprised I even passed to 11th grade." We've since learned that the shuttling has stopped. Jaime, on turning 18, dropped out.

Our March People pages carried a story about NEA member Louis Tremblay and his work in Montana, where he helped unearth what many believe is the largest Tyrannosaurus Rex on record.

Even before the ink had dried on that story, we found out that an NEA member in Virginia, Elaine Baker, had also worked at the site. For reports about the excavation, Baker suggests you sign on to the Internet at www.earthwatch.org/ed/rigby/trex.html.

Sometimes our stories set off memories for our readers, and they, in turn, send us more stories. Such is the case with our cover story on teaching kids to read. Lifetime NEA member Jane Woodworth wrote to say she'd noticed that Dot Fowler, the teacher on the January cover, used nursery rhymes to get kids hooked on reading.

Woodworth recalled her own experience in 1921 at Central School in Kalispell, Montana, and "my first grade teacher Miss Jane Donovan, perched on a high stool, with a rubber-tipped pointer directed to the lesson of the day. We sat chanting 'ab eb ib ob ub.' When we were ready, we marched to the book room and brought back our primers."

Yet another story behind the story.

Bill Fischer

Meet

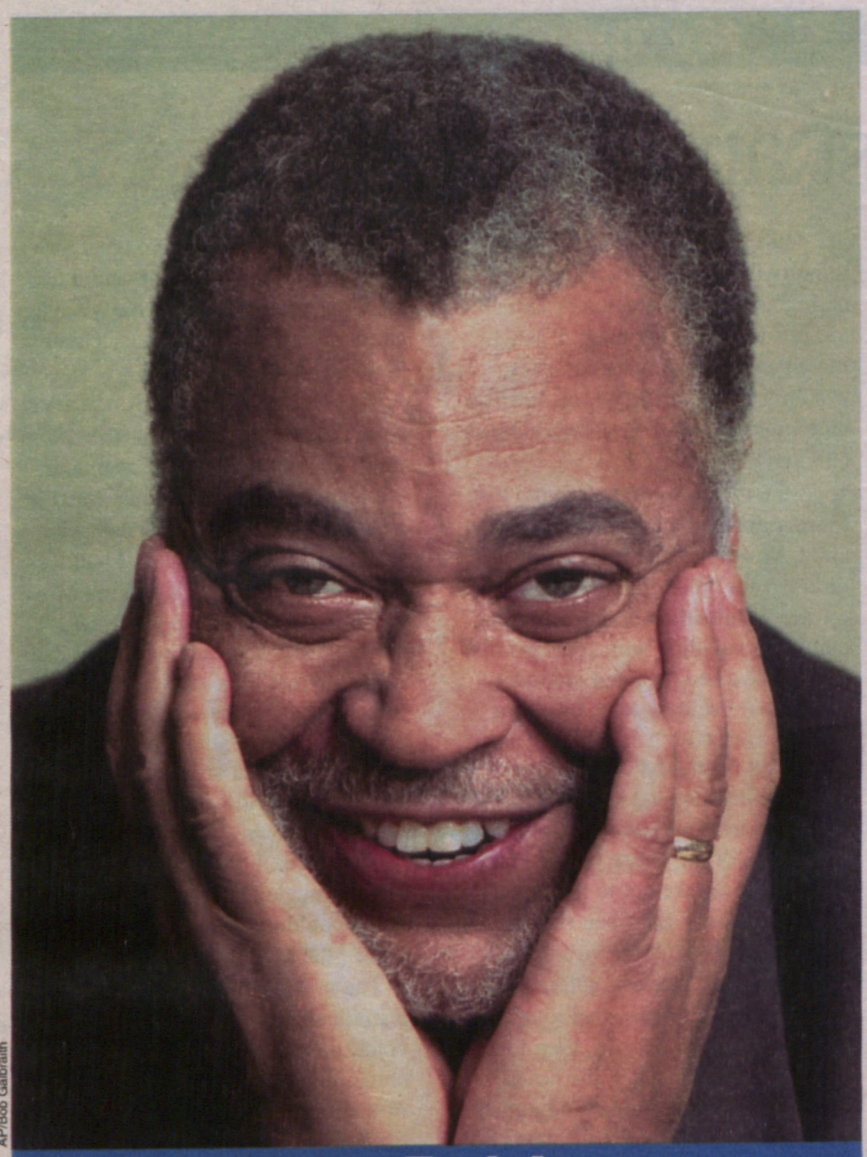
If you hear the booming, eloquent voice of James Earl Jones everywhere you go, thank a teacher. He does.

*Even if you've never seen James Earl Jones, you recognize the voice. In various roles and voiceovers, the deep, bass voice has embodied royalty (*The Lion King*), evil (Darth Vader), authority (CNN), and trust (Bell Atlantic).*

This spring, Jones's voice, heard on radio stations across the country, urged Americans to get involved in NEA's Read Across America campaign, celebrated on March 2.

But there have been times when Jones's voice was rarely heard, except to stumble over his words. A childhood trauma led to a severe stutter, and Jones remained nearly mute until a high school teacher helped him speak publicly again.

Jones spoke recently with NEA Today *staffer Anita Merina.*



AP/Bob Galbraith

James Earl Jones

Beyond the Voice

How did your teacher help you speak again?
I was a freshman in a small public high school in Brethren, Michigan, at the time, and I very rarely spoke. Instead, I wrote poetry. When my English teacher Donald Crouch discovered that I wrote poetry, he challenged me to read it in front of the class.

I strained to get the words out, pushing from the bottom of my soul. I opened my mouth—and to my astonishment, the words flowed out smoothly, every one of them. There was no stutter.

And Dr. Crouch said, "Well, maybe we have an answer to your problem." He insisted that I write and recite more poetry to the class.

Are you still in touch with Dr. Crouch?
Sadly, no. He's deceased. The last time I spoke to him I was doing a play at Yale, and I said I'd send him a ticket if he wanted to see me perform. But he said no. He was blind and couldn't see and said it would be a shame to hear me and not be able to see me.

Do you still write and recite poetry?
No, not really, although one will pop out once in a while.

I'm not really good at speech, and therefore, I'm not good at narration. I've never recorded a novel for instance. I wouldn't know how to do that.

But when it comes to poetry, I sometimes enjoy it. It's always a chore because I can't say phrases unless there's a rhythm involved. If it's blank verse or narration, I have to find some sort of organic rhythm to the statement.

You recently recorded a public service announcement for NEA's Read Across America campaign. Why?
It was a chance to do something relevant to a child. I have a child, and I did it for him as well as others.

In films, you've played a good father—Mufasa in *The Lion King*—and an evil one—Darth Vader in *Star Wars*. What kind of father are you?
I can only measure that by my son, who's now a teenager. If he thinks his life is going well, I guess he gives us, his parents, some credit for it. But there isn't really a model I try to be. Every child deserves a special parent.

I often share things with my son that I'm working on. Currently, I'm working on the PBS Nature series, and there are episodes that I find might stimulate him in his struggles with some of his science classes. Whenever I find something in my own work that might help him, I try to share it with him.

As spokesperson for Bell Atlantic, you've visited a lot of schools. What's impressed you most about them?
We're just beginning to make young people aware that information is more and more readily available and that someday, with a single computer, one can have total information. So the job becomes how to help a child sift through all that material and focus on what he'd really like to know.

Why aren't you traveling to schools much anymore?
Back in the '70s, I was often asked to come into high schools on career day. But I found it futile, because kids without hope would look at me and say, "Okay, he's an exception, so what? He was lucky." Once I realized I was often viewed as the rare representative of success, I stopped going.

What can you say to kids desperate for guidance?
I think a child can only get guidance from parents. I can't inspire a child to success by talking off the top of my head. If a parent isn't there, a child has got to get it from inside, and that's hard. It's hard to tell kids that, but that's what I really believe.

What acting job are you proudest of?
I'd have to say that my most recent role, Stephen Kumalo in *Cry the Beloved Country*, is one of the pieces that I would be proud to leave as my legacy.

You were on location in South Africa to film the movie. What were your impressions?
There are some images I will never forget. I saw a young child who would have been my son's age standing on a heap of rubbish that had festering corpses of critters and plastic bags and trash, and this child stood there looking for something of value.

I never got out and said to the child, "There's nothing of value there," because then, where else was he to look?

It was very important that I see that, because symbolic freedom does not have an immediate impact on those who need the freedom most. It told me that the country still had a long way to go.

Resources

- *Voices and Silences,* an autobiography by James Earl Jones and Penelope Niven. Touchstone Books, 1994, $14. Check your local bookstore or go to www.amazon.com for a discounted price.
- *A&E Biography Series: James Earl Jones With a Strong Voice.* To get a copy of the accompanying A&E teacher's guide, call 212/210-1338 or Fax 212/210-1429.
- Bell Atlantic recently announced a new foundation that will offer grants to nonprofit organizations that bring new services and technology to communities in the Bell Atlantic/NYNEX area, from Maine to Virginia. For more information on the grants and application guidelines, check out www.nynexfoundation.com on the Web.

Debate

Should Nationally Certified Teachers Be Paid More?

Yes

Jeanne Serven is nationally certified in the field of Early Adolescence/English Language Arts. A 25-year teaching veteran, she's currently on loan to the Illinois State Board of Education, where she works to help improve the quality of teaching and learning. She can be reached at Jaserven@aol.com.

Traditionally, experienced teachers in search of professional salaries have had three options: 1) Get as much education as the pay scale rewards. 2) Move to a "rich" school district in the suburbs. 3) Leave the classroom to go into administration.

It's high time to add a fourth option for teachers who continually improve their practice and meet the highest standards set by their profession: Provide financial rewards for nationally certified teachers.

I teach in a small, rural school district in Illinois. I have a masters' degree, 25 years of teaching experience, and I'm at the top of my salary scale. I make $33,987.

Now, I'm not inclined to move to the suburbs or become an administrator. I'm interested in being the best teacher I can be for my students.

So four years ago, I applied for national certification in Early Adolescence/English Language Arts. For months, I collected student work, videotaped my teaching, put together a professional portfolio, and examined the instruction in my classroom.

Then I analyzed and reflected on what I saw. In the process, I improved the instruction in my classroom and boosted the level of student learning.

Unlike most evaluations of teacher performance, the national board evaluation process was fair and equitable. Evaluators are practicing classroom teachers in the same content areas and grade levels as the candidates they're evaluating.

The strength of the process lies in the requirement for actual classroom documentation and evidence, rather than personal recommendations. It's an assessment based on standards developed by classroom teachers.

Like anyone who has gained additional expertise, I'd like to be rewarded. The additional money that my national certification could earn would provide an incentive for me to stay in my rural school. Is it fair for rural and urban students to lose some of their best teachers because of the system's inability to reimburse them adequately for their efforts?

I realize there are some obstacles to overcome. First, the funding for raises for nationally certified teachers would have to come from the state. It can't be left to individual districts with varying abilities to pay.

Second, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards must push to offer certification in every teaching field as quickly as possible. By 2003, 17 certificates will be available, covering 82 percent of the profession. (For details, call 800/532-1813.)

Finally, educators must understand that paying more for nationally certified teachers won't close the door to recognition of expertise in the profession.

Instead, it will create more options for experienced teachers, more mentors for new teachers, more mentors for those who wish to achieve national certification, and more spokespeople for the profession.

Encouraging more teachers to become nationally certified will create better teachers in all schools and reward them for their knowledge and skills in the classroom. Since, as a recent report notes, "what teachers know and do is the most important influence on what students learn," national certification will pay off. And our students will reap the dividends.

No

Elizabeth Ahlgren is the chair of the math department at Morse High School in San Diego. She's a local building rep, treasurer of the San Diego Teachers Association, and a member of the California Teachers Association State Council of Education. She can be reached at eahlgren@morsehs.com.

National certification is an arduous, time-consuming, and expensive voluntary process designed to "establish high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do." And it may have great value for those who choose to go through it. But paying more to those who succeed has precious little value for the profession, teachers, and students.

■ *Paying nationally certified teachers more will promote elitism, not a stronger teaching profession.* Some argue that national certification elevates teaching and makes teachers professionals, like doctors and lawyers. That's nonsense.

What really makes us professionals? Professional wages that attract people to the field and keep them there, and professional working conditions that make it easy for educators to do their jobs well.

What good is it to pay a few experienced teachers more money when new teachers don't earn enough to be able to afford to stay in the profession?

Paying new teachers better salaries would be a far better way to support the profession. So would supporting new teachers in their classrooms with mentoring, adequate instructional materials, and high quality professional development activities.

If the goal is a top quality teacher in every classroom, providing "bonuses" to a few senior teachers won't do much to achieve it.

■ *Paying nationally certified teachers more will help a few teachers at the expense of the many.* All teachers—not just candidates for national certification—should engage in rich collegial discussions, take the time to reflect on and improve lessons, and maintain a professional portfolio.

And all teachers should be compensated for the work they do—not for what they did in the past, not for what they plan to do, and not for the titles they hold.

In San Diego, nationally certified teachers become mentor teachers and are compensated for the hours they spend working with other teachers, not for their new credential.

Why not pay all teachers for they work they do now—for the time they donate to activities crucial to school and student success, like curriculum development, student tutoring, and participation in school site councils?

And there's a question of fairness to consider: Is a bonus for nationally certified teachers fair to those with second jobs, young children, or dependent parents, who can't afford to take the time and spend the money —$2,000 at last count—to apply for national certification. Do they deserve less than those who can afford to be involved in the certification process?

■ *Paying nationally certified teachers more will not improve student learning.* Paying a stipend to those who successfully attain national certification may lure a few more teachers into attempting national certification. But it's not going to make much of a dent in efforts to improve learning in America's public schools.

To improve student learning in this country, all of us need to go to work every day and do our best to help as many students as we can.

That's why most of us chose to teach in the first place—and why a divisive pay raise for nationally certified teachers doesn't add up.

What's Your Opinion?

Should nationally certified teachers be paid more?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

Can retention be good for a student?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
66% Yes **34% No**

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Technology

1998 Technology + Learning Conference

The 12th Annual Technology + Learning Conference, co-sponsored by National Education Association with National School Boards Administration, will be held in Nashville, TN, Thursday-Saturday, October 29-31, 1998. Nine workshops and two roundtables presented by NEA members, as well as other programs featuring technology career development and classroom utilization, will be held in the NEA Center at the Conference. The special registration fee for NEA members is $235, less than half the cost of full-price registration. For program and registration information, please visit NEA's Website (www.nea.org) or call NEA's Technology + Learning Conference fax-on-demand (703/531-2224). For registration forms only, call 202/822-7752.

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Books

'Peacocks in a Chicken Farm'

Is your school on the hot, new list of the "best public high schools" in America?

Class Struggle

What's Wrong (and Right) with America's Best Public High Schools
Jay Mathews. Times Books/Random House, 304 pp, $24.50, 800/733-3000.

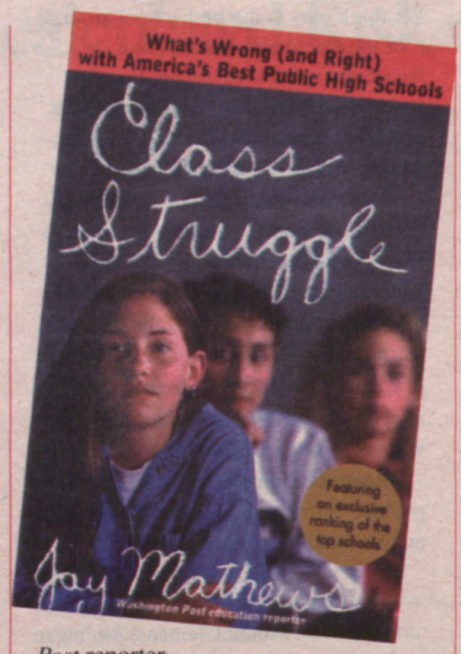
Any list that attempts to rank public high schools—let alone list the top 230—is guaranteed to tick people off. So if the list in Jay Mathews's new book *Class Struggle*, reprinted a few weeks ago in *Newsweek* and covered by media everywhere, has you steaming, rest assured you're not alone.

With Jaime Escalante (of "Stand and Deliver" fame) as his guide, Mathews defines the best public high schools as the ones that challenge the most students. His yardstick: the percentage of students at each school that take Advanced Placement (AP) tests.

That kind of quantification makes news, sells books, and starts lots of arguments in faculty lounges. But when the storm blows over, the question for educators is, what's left?

Two things: a well-written (if poorly organized) book of value and a challenge educators shouldn't ignore.

To write *Class Struggle*, *Washington Post* reporter Jay Mathews started with a critical question: Why are the best American high schools "treated like peacocks in a chicken farm" instead of "useful examples of how the majority of U.S. schools might improve"?


What's Wrong (and Right) with America's Best Public High Schools
Class Struggle
Featuring an exclusive ranking of the top schools
Jay Mathews
Washington Post education reporter

To find the answer, Mathews spent three years talking to people at Mamaroneck High School in Westchester County, New York, and at 75 other schools around the country.

Mathews's conclusions, like his subtitle, split into two neat camps.

What's right: "Elite schools have created nurturing student enclaves, shown the worth of keeping imaginative teachers, rethought the use of time, demonstrated the power of outside tutoring . . . shown that smaller classes with rigorous lesson plans produce understanding and learning . . . [and] illustrated the power of involved parents . . ."

And what's wrong: "When the best schools in the country cannot resist labeling some of their students as mediocre and denying them the most challenging courses, then all schools, no matter how ambitious and affluent, are in trouble."

Elite schools, Mathews discovers, limit students—particularly those from families who aren't white, rich, and powerful—through tracking, gatekeeping, and out-and-out snobbery.

"Public schools," Mathews writes, "still operate on the principle that the book smart and the street smart should not be given the same chance to learn."

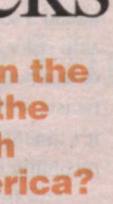
Which brings us to the book's worthy challenge. "Elite schools have deepened the educations of their most willing customers," Mathews writes. "The next test is how well they sell their intellectual wares to those who are resisting the pitch. Can they inspire slower, less motivated students as well as children on the honor roll?"

That's a test all of America's educators should be willing to take.

—Stefanie Weiss

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-00-FB)



2 Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6-12). Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) Ways to stop and prevent harassment (#1864-8-00-FB)

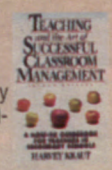
3 Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans: Fun Tales from NEA Members. ($6.95) Enjoy this heartwarming collection of more than 90 humorous stories from the classroom. (#1880-X-00-FB)

4 The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-00-FB)

5 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) This booklet is loaded with practical advice for new teachers, including how to land a job, manage student conduct, get along with administrators, maintain personal priorities, and much more. (#2151-7-00-FB)

6 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) Teachers say, "We want how-to materials on discipline." This book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-00-FB)

7 Teaching and the Art of Successful Classroom Management. Harvey Kraut. ($14.95) Beginning secondary teachers rejoice! Now there's a handbook just for you. (#2004-9-00-FB)



8 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) This compact book answers your questions about block scheduling. (#2159-2-00-FB)

9 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. A perfect gift, this book includes 1,001 classroom-tested tips. (#2150-9-00-FB)

10 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-00-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.3 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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Books by NEA Members

A+ Parents: Help Your Child Learn and Succeed in School
Adrienne Mack. McBooks Press. 144 pp., $12.95, 888/266-5711, E-mail: amack@ica.com. This book advises parents of children ages 4-8 how to build a home environment that will boost their child's chance for success in school—and life.

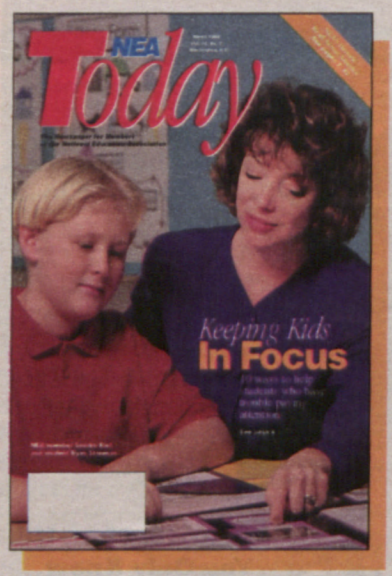
Dear Teacher, If You Only Knew
Adults Recovering From Sexual Abuse Speak To Educators
John M. Seryak. The Dear Teacher Project, 112 pp., $10 plus $2 s&h, 330/336-7060, E-mail: jseryak@aol.com. A collection of moving and disturbing letters from adults recovering from childhood sexual abuse, this book helps teachers recognize behaviors and signs of sexual abuse in children.

From Teacher To Teacher
What the Colleges Don't Teach Us
Bob Gentilli. 74 pp., $6.50, P.O. Box 388, Albany, WI 53502, E-mail: Gentillb@belleville.k12.wi.us. A young teacher publishes his first-year journal writings as a teaching tool for other beginners.

Writing Your Life: Developing Skills through Life Story Writing
Nan Merrick Phifer. *Glencoe, 120 pp., $5 for the text ($5.75 for instructor's manual) 800/334-7344.* This book of exercises helps you use your own life as a springboard for developing writing skills. Includes grammar tips.

Wrong Way Renee
Fern C. Waskovich. *Royal Fireworks Press. 61 pp., $5 plus $3 s&h, 914/726-4444.* Sibling rivalry is portrayed with humor and understanding in this novel aimed at middle school kids. The storyline: Ten-year-old Renee, a middle child, looks for ways to stop being caught in the middle.

Letters



Retaining Standards

Your debate on grade retention was timely (Debate, March), since we're now facing increased student standards where I teach.

I say get the kids as much help as possible, but retain early and build a strong learning foundation before trying to put a house of knowledge on top of it.

If it takes more than one year for some students to master the skills necessary at each level, so be it.

John Lehman
Battle Ground, Washington

Pass Over the Holidays

An NEA member suggests that NEA start supporting educators "who are finding ways to recognize religious holidays in the classroom" (Letters, March).

I'd like support for recognizing Rosh Hashanah, Sukkot, and Simchat Torah in my classroom. How about Ramadan, Muharran, and Rajab? What about Caitra or Phalguna?

Perhaps, due to the multitude of religious beliefs among staff and students in a public school, we should avoid opening an unconstitutional can of worms and maintain a wall of separation between church and state.

Private schools are available to recognize religion. Public schools must recognize religious diversity.

Carol Weintraub
Riverside, California

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

Here's a suggestion to help children who move a lot (Cover story, February): Equip a mobile classroom that would move from job to job with migrant families.

A teacher in such a classroom could 1) provide a consistent education for pre-K and kindergarten students, 2) work with the school-of-the-moment to smooth transitions, 3) tutor as needed, 4) update educational records and provide those records when needed.

This daunting task could be provided through a Vista Volunteer type of organization. Teachers could sign on for one-year stints, with salary and possibly forgiveness of college loans. I'm sure it would work. We would all benefit.

Mary jo Radock
Fairview, Pennsylvania

More Edison Survivors

Like Tiffany Lowe, I was a first-year teacher at Washington Elementary School last year (Letter from Texas, February). Unlike Lowe, I found a school filled with supportive colleagues, a responsive administration, and a very supportive partner in the Edison Project.

I also worked long hours, not because Edison or my school's principal demanded it, but because I was excited about the Edison program.

Lowe says she was shocked to learn how Edison chooses teachers to present workshops at their national conferences. I didn't feel pitted against my colleagues in this endeavor. The experience of presenting at a conference in Chicago allowed me to meet many wonderful teachers who were eager to share ideas.

Lowe's claim that Edison didn't make good on its promise of daily time for professional development doesn't square with my experience. Some teaching teams voted to have their time in small chunks throughout the day, but my team had two full periods a day for professional development.

In short, I'm disappointed that NEA chose to print such an obviously biased letter from a teacher whose views do not represent those of her colleagues.

Sharla Mullens
Sherman, Texas

We're NEA members who've taught at a public school managed by the Edison Project for the past three years. We think ours is the best school around!

At the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Academy, test scores are up, there's a waiting list of several hundred students, and the district is considering opening another Edison elementary school.

Edison has motivated our school leaders to be visionaries and our teachers to transform their classrooms into rich learning environments. Our students now take responsibility for their own learning and for working to their full potential. Our students' parents fully support us and regularly communicate with us through Edison's E-mail system.

Joining the Edison Project has been a positive learning experience for all of us and for our community.

CarolAnn Pollak
Suzanne Kotas
Mount Clemens, Michigan

Bricks, Mortar, and Money

I was thrilled to see President Chase's column on investing in school repair and renovation (President's Viewpoint, February). Communities need to take responsibility for helping public schools shape up. Parents who work in posh offices would never work in buildings like our schools. Thanks for stressing the problems that we face.

Pamela Piziak
Beckley, West Virginia

Affirmative Action

I fail to see what NEA's Office of the General Counsel calls an "assault" on affirmative action on campus (Rights Watch, February).

The process of choosing a student to attend a school should never be based on skin color. If a minority student is chosen over a better-qualified white students, racism still exists—reverse racism. I say it's time to choose the best student based on ability and talent, not skin color.

Stephen Kilpatrick
Sharon, Massachusetts

Your article, "Diversity Fades on Campus," equates "minority" with African American. But if you counted the many Asian Americans, for example, attending the University of California's law and medical schools, you might find that diversity hasn't faded nearly as much as you think.

Roland Spickermann
Lorraine Tong Spickermann
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Free Speech

Two recent letters really disturbed me (Letters, February). Both of them blasted previous letter writers for one reason only: Their letters were not politically correct.

We who fight censorship so mightily in our school libraries shouldn't be so hypocritical as to censor others' beliefs in a publication that's supposed to be representative of its constituents.

Brian Hawes
Maupin, Oregon

Athletics vs. Femininity?

Your interview with basketball star Rebecca Lobo (Meet, February) was great until the question, "Is there a trade-off between athletics and femininity?"

What a sexist question! Would you have asked a male athlete, "Is there a trade-off between athletics and masculinity? I don't think so.

I'm a mother, a grandmother, a very feminine lady, and I've been an athlete all my life. Come on, NEA—wake up!

Lyn Kalinowski
San Ramon, California

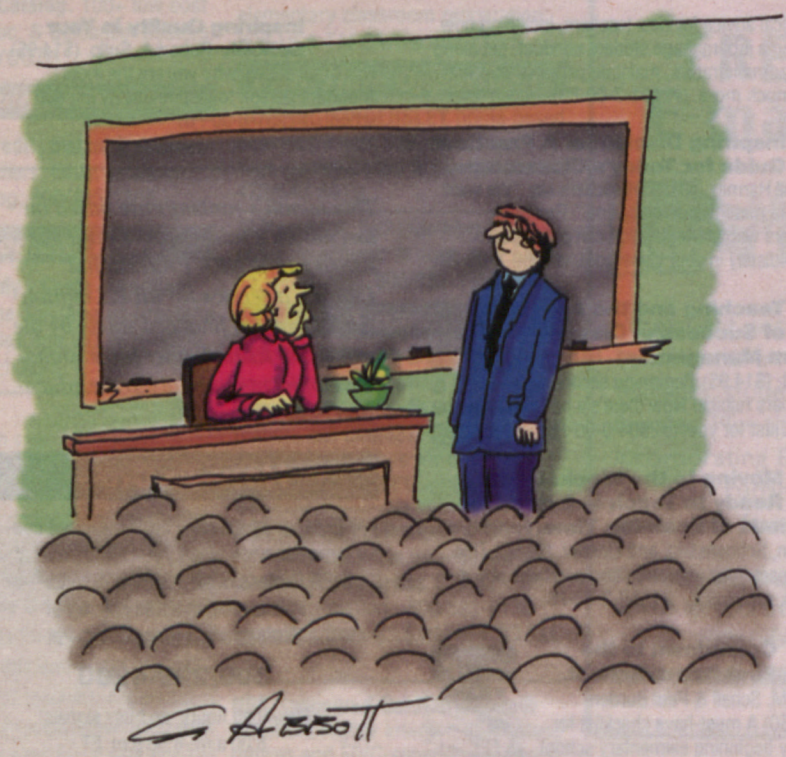
Update from Canada

I very much enjoy reading *NEA Today*, and since I live in Ontario, Canada, I was most encouraged to read the article (Newsmakers, January) about our recent province-wide political protest.

We walked out to protest the government's assault on public education, collective bargaining, teachers, freedom of speech, and just about everything educators hold dear.

All the teachers I've told about the article in *NEA Today* were thrilled and felt supported to know that NEA stood in favor of our actions. Thanks for the much needed morale boost!

Susan Carey (carey@istar.ca)
Ontario, Canada



"I wonder if the trend toward downsizing will ever get as far as the classroom."

Letter from: Newman, California

Taking an Uncalculated Risk on Center Stage–Literally

Knowing absolutely nothing about drama was probably my greatest asset. Had I any inkling about what I was getting myself into three years ago, I never would have entertained the idea of putting on a full-production play.

Convincing children to take risks is one thing. What, after all, have they got to lose? Teachers, on the other hand, are notoriously un-risk-taking, and putting on a play is risky business. I wouldn't have taken the risk myself were it not for the challenge issued by my kindly principal.

What's more, I had nothing to fall back on—like tenure, for instance. I was young and ignorant and just gullible enough to believe my principal's assertions that fourth graders were up to the challenge.

I took the plunge.

But before I even held the first rehearsal, I booked the auditorium for four days, so that every student in our school would see the play, and so that parents and family could attend a special Saturday show.

I didn't do that out of confidence. It was insurance. I've never been able to endure humiliation on a colossal scale. The threat of failure had to be very large.

The mistakes I made that year were comical, if not painful. I was egalitarian to a fault. Students auditioned for their parts and were judged by their peers. The result, of course, wasn't always pretty.

The play I purchased that year, *The Trial of Goldilocks*, is truly witty and hilarious, with some very demanding roles. But all the boys wanted to play Papa Bear, and all the girls wanted to play Goldilocks. In their eyes, the other 20-some roles were all chicken scratch. And that made them really hard to sell.

Fearful that fourth graders really couldn't memorize lines in a play, I doubled up students on each part. To deal with the awkwardness, I arbitrarily split the play into a first and second act. (Greenhorn directors have no business editing plays.)

To keep credibility with the audience, I had the actors in Scene I exchange their costumes with their replacements in Scene II. This task was accomplished amid great mayhem in the dressing room/library at the cost of a long intermission and many lost or torn articles of clothing.

Since I had never actually been in a play, I had no real idea about how much time to allot to rehearsals. I believed that three weeks would prove more than sufficient.

What? One, maybe two, hours a day should do the trick?

I found out right away just how optimistic that estimate was. Blocking out each page took at least an hour—and there were more than 30 pages in the play.

After two days of rehearsal, I threw away my lesson plans. "Welcome to Camp Drama," I told the kids. "How do you feel about taking a little three-week break from math and science and social studies?"

It seemed like a good idea at first, but after about two weeks of relentless rehearsals, even the most theatrical of my students began to sag. It was all hard work, often damned near torturous.

The curtain rose that first day to an audience of kindergartners and first graders. Even kindergartners can be intimidating when they're sitting on the floor about 200-deep, watching your every move.

But they watched attentively, laughed at some of the right parts (and some other parts, too), clapped enthusiastically when it was over, and, in general, made my young thespian troop feel like a class act.

We had succeeded!

On the last day of the show, parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents filled the auditorium to capacity. When it was over, the applause droned on for several minutes, and I found myself wiping away tears of pride and joy.

One grandparent had flown in from Colorado just to see his granddaughter's debut. When he shook my hand, his eyes were full of tears. His shy little granddaughter, who rarely spoke two words in class, had delivered her lines boldly and flawlessly.

Three years have gone by. This year, my students put on another in what promises to be a long run of class plays.

Over the years, I've learned to believe the very advice I so often give my students: It's okay to take risks. In fact, it's probably the only way we ever learn anything.

My kids may not remember the math worksheets they do daily, the stories we read in class, or even who their very best friend was way back when. But chances are they'll always remember the play in which each and every one of them was a star.

John Paiva is a fourth grade teacher at Von Renner Elementary in Newman, California.

More on Amistad

Your interview with *Amistad* actor Morgan Freeman and producer Debbie Allen paints *NEA Today* as an uncritical cheerleader for the film *Amistad* and its creators.

Both speak about the film's historic accuracy, but many critics have questioned the film's content.

To pick just one example, the stirring words of John Quincy Adams before the Supreme Court, as he invokes the spirits of the nation's founders to guide and move the justices, are all fiction.

The transcript, published in 1841, shows an impassioned, cogent, blistering, and often ironic argument aimed at the justices' heads, not their hearts. I found it fascinating reading.

Spielberg, if he read it, did not. He turned the scene into a bicultural seance complete with mood music.

Your failure to question Allen and Freeman's claims to cinematic truth is a disservice to teachers and students.

Kerry Berry
Bay City, Michigan

Even though there may be some educational value to R-rated movies like *Amistad*, I believe it's inappropriate to show them in the classroom, even with parental permission. There must be a better way to teach history without condoning violence, sex, and foul language.

Diane Clawson
Palmer, Alaska

Einstein Wasn't 'Gifted'

It's worth noting that the world's definition of giftedness isn't necessarily the same as the public school definition (Debate, January).

In my 15 years as an educator, I've seen that the child who writes the best essay, develops the most inventive science project, sings on pitch, wins the race, or demonstrates leadership skills, is quite often not a "gifted" child.

The "gifted" child will have to adapt to a world in which multiple intelligences are valued. I wonder if labeling these children "supreme" serves them well in the long run.

How much more pleasant for an Einstein, Jordan, or Pavarotti to note, "I've done okay for someone who isn't gifted."

Susan Logan
St. Cloud, Florida

Great, But . . .

NEA Today is a fantastic magazine except for two minor points.

First, you keep promoting so many books. I don't know any teachers who have time to do any outside reading.

Second, you need to do more to make class size the #1 education issue. Is there a single teacher whose problems wouldn't be at least partially eased by having 15 students in a class? Wake up, America. It's the class size, stupid!

Lisa Sharp
Los Angeles, California

Congratulations on another outstanding issue of *NEA Today*.

From Bob Chase's editorial on nagging for school improvements (February) to the well-expressed letters from readers, the magazine showcases excellent layout, organization, and color photographs, and includes timely and practical news for teachers of all levels and assignments.

If only you had been there when my career was starting in the '50s.

Arthur Zbinden
Abington, Pennsylvania

Let's Talk

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- By the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Submit a Letter to the Editor"
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**Money* magazine, February 1998.

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†*U.S. Banker* magazine, May 1997.

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